

Daniel Bruno Sanz

CUBA AT A CROSSROADS

The New American Strategy

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Dedicated to our First Lady, Michelle Obama

"Cuba at a Crossroads reflects Daniel Bruno Sanz's uncommon vision of Cuban development. His book is the first complete and detailed analysis available on the counterproductive and futile U.S. embargo on Cuba."

Dr. Sergei Khrushchev

Cuba at a Crossroads, The New American Strategy, is the most detailed account of Cuba - U.S. relations to date. The index has over 500 entries. The book states that the U.S. embargo assists the Castros by creating a permanent state of emergency that links dissent to foreign interference and the embargo encourages the disaffected to abandon Cuba. The book chronicles the influence of the Mafia and the military's role today. A must read for scholars and policy makers.

Dr. Sergei Khrushchev is the son of the late Nikita Khrushchev, whose assistance was key to the consolidation of the Cuban Revolution and the rule of Fidel Castro after 1959.

Dr. Khrushchev lectures on Russian economic and political reforms, U.S. - Soviet relations, the Soviet space program and Nikita Khrushchev's economic, political and security reforms.

He is profiled in Who's Who in the World, Who's Who in the United States, Who's Who of Contemporary Achievements, International Authors and Writers, International Who's Who of Intellectuals and Contemporary Authors Gala Research. He received the Lenin prize for scientific research, the Prize of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R., the Hammer and Sickle Gold Star as well as several awards for achievements in space and computer research. He is a full member of the International Academy of Information (1993), the Russian Space Academy (1994), the Russian Society of Informatics (1990) and the Russian Engineering Society (1970).

Today he is a U.S. citizen and teaches at Brown University and the Naval War College in Newport, RI.

FOREWORD

“My answer on Cuba is Cuba is not a foreign policy question. Cuba is a domestic issue. In foreign policy, the embargo makes no sense. It doesn’t do anything. It’s quite clear we cannot starve Cuba to death. We learned that when the Soviet stopped subsidizing Cuba and they didn’t collapse. It’s a domestic issue.”

— *former National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft, May 2008*

The aim of this book is break the stalemate in Cuba policy in 2009. This will mean abandonment of the embargo and normalization of relations without preconditions the Cubans are unlikely to accept. Detractors will no doubt dismiss it as naïve coddling of Castro, but this book is not an apology for the Castro dictatorship and the end of the embargo does not imply a retreat of American power or a passive foreign policy, as embargo sponsors would have us believe.

This book will not argue against the embargo on humanitarian grounds just as it rejects arguments for the embargo because of human rights violations in Cuba.

There were times when the embargo made sense and was plausible as a strategy to protect American interests. In 1960, world trade was heavily skewed towards American firms and Cuba, a banana republic, was wholly dependent on the United States. It was unlikely Castro could survive without American cooperation. But barter agreements with the Soviets foiled the embargo. When the Soviets expired, Congress passed amendments called Mack, Toricelli and Helms-Burton to ensure Castro’s demise; but by then his power, as queen-bee of the Cuban Revolution, was institutionalized. If the embargo were going to oust Castro and company after the Soviet collapse, it would have done so by 1994. After 1994, Cuba’s economy turned a corner and never looked back. The embargo will never work.

Actually, it does work, but not the way we have been misled to believe. The embargo is a business. It is used as a taxpayer sponsored, affirmative-action welfare program by savvy exiles. Here's how it works: An anti-Castro non-profit entity is set up with a lofty name. A bill is introduced and passed in Congress to fund the entity and appropriations are made for it. A revenue stream is generated and employment created. Government programs such as the ineffectual Radio Marti also fit this description.

But sometimes an "honest" living fighting Castro is not good enough. Felipe Sixto worked for the Center for a Free Cuba, which describes itself as an independent, nonpartisan institution dedicated to promoting human rights and a transition to democracy and the rule of law in Cuba. It is a government funded non-profit. In July 2007 Sixto joined the Bush White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs and was assigned to deal with state legislators, Native American groups and Hispanic officials on issues such as Cuba, Puerto Rico, health, labor, transportation, the environment and energy. In March 2009 Sixto was convicted and sentenced to 30 months in prison for the theft of \$579,247 from the Center for a Free Cuba. He admitted his guilt.

TO THE HONORABLE BARACK OBAMA, 44TH PRESIDENT OF
THE UNITED STATES

ON THE OCCASION OF HIS UPCOMING SPEECH AT
THE FIFTH SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS, PORT-OF-SPAIN,
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO,
17 APRIL 2009

Dear Mr. President,

On May 25, 1965, in Lewiston, Maine, Mohammed Ali defeated Sonny Liston in the first round by TKO. As Ali stood over Liston in triumph, photographer Neil Leifer captured one of the most iconic moments in sports history. Forty years later, this image was matted, framed and prominently displayed in your new Senate office suite. Now, perhaps it has accompanied you to the White House.

Ali was ahead of his time, a man of principles who speaks his mind. Ali is a thinking man's boxer. Less powerful than Liston, Frazier and Foreman, he understood how to unnerve his opponents before a bout. In his prime, Ali was controversial. He retired his Anglo name, rejected Christianity and went to jail for refusal to serve in Vietnam. They called him un-American and he was stripped of his boxing titles. He lost millions in revenue. He was an American dissident. Today, he is an American hero. He opened the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games. He is your hero.

In 1996 and 98 Ali traveled to Cuba with medicine supplies blacklisted by the U.S. embargo.

He did it because he understood that American conglomerates dominate the pharmaceutical and medical fields worldwide. He also knows that even if food and

medicine were exempt from the embargo, the financial carnage the embargo leaves in its wake leaves Cubans like his friend Teofilo Stevenson, unable to buy. Olympic gold medallist Stevenson, dubbed the Cuban Ali because of likeness and similarities, turned down Don King's offer of five million dollars to go pro in 1976 because he would have to defect from Cuba to accept it.

Mohammed Ali, a U.N. ambassador for peace, has called on the United States to end the embargo on Cuba.

The U.N. General Assembly has condemned the U.S. embargo on Cuba every year since 1992 and demanded the U.S. "take the necessary steps to repeal or invalidate" it. In 2000 and '01, this Resolution passed 167 to 3 with three abstentions. In 2002, it passed 173 votes to three, with four nations abstaining. In 2003, only two nations voted with the U.S.

In its 2002 report, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations condemned the embargo as "the main cause of malnutrition in Cuba." UNICEF has condemned the embargo. UNESCO condemned the embargo, saying it "violates the rights of the Cuban people." The United Nations Population Fund condemned the embargo for deterioration of Cuban living standards. The World Health Organization condemned the embargo for its "very significant negative impact on the overall performance of the national economy" which "compromises the quality of life of the population, specifically the children, the elderly and the infirm." It notes that the embargo increases the cost of milk for children by 600% and puts medical equipment out of reach. Amnesty International condemned the embargo because it "helped undermine the enjoyment of key civil and political rights in Cuba by fueling a climate in which the fundamental rights of freedom of association, expression and assembly are routinely denied." The U.S. embargo against Cuba is described as "the longest and most severe set of trade sanctions ever imposed on any one nation" by international health organizations.

Mr. President, it is not a coincidence that the embargo is nearly fifty years old and Fidel Castro holds the world record for non-inherited longevity in power.

Mr. President, during the election campaign you said that, as president, you would stand before the U.N. General Assembly to let the world know that "America is back." Now is the time, and I know of no better way to do it, than to boldly announce that the U.S. will heed the call made every year to drop the embargo on Cuba.

Unable to dislodge Castro, the ever-frustrated embargo on Cuba has metastasized into an absurd, unsustainable policy at odds with who we are. Doomed to failure

because of its unilateral nature, the embargo has become an ersatz blockade. On February 28, 2004, James Sabzali, a Canadian citizen, was charged with seventy-five counts of violating a 1917 U.S. law – the Trading with the Enemy “Act” and one count of conspiracy. He was convicted of selling water purification supplies to Cuba – mostly from Canada, but also from the United States, in violation of the embargo. He grossed U.S. \$3 million in sales. A laughable sum for business. Sabzali, a Canadian, ended up with a criminal record for violating American law even though he lived in another country when he sold goods to Cuba. When he visited the U.S, he was charged with smuggling, taken to court, given a year’s probation and fined \$10,000.

The hapless Sabzali spent three years in the U.S. under strict travel restrictions, including fourteen months when forced to wear an electronic monitoring bracelet and restricted to no more than an hour drive from his home – even to visit his wife and children back in Canada. The irony is that the extended family of Osama bin Laden was allowed by the Bush White House and State Department to leave the U.S. immediately after 9/11 on private jets even as the F.A.A. ordered all aircraft grounded. American intelligence never got the chance to question the bin Ladens about the attack on the W.T.C. and Pentagon.

I think you will agree, Mr. President, that safe drinking water is a human right. Certainly, had a water borne epidemic appeared, proponents of the embargo would have seized upon it as proof of Castro’s disregard for human life. At the same time, they zealously condemn businessmen like Sabzali, whose crime was to sell Cubans the wherewithal to provide clean water, defeating the U.S. embargo.

What is it about Cuba that Gives Embargo Proponents the Fits?

Is it Fidel Castro? At 82, Castro is a shadow of a man. Unable to speak in public, he is reduced to photo ops with visiting dignitaries (last call for photos with Fidel!) and quaint reflections in Granma, Cuba’s daily rag. Cuba’s Gross Domestic Product is smaller than the G.D.P. of the Bronx and its army is the same size as the New York City Police Department. Fidel, Raul and the Cuban government certainly don’t have the military or economic might to challenge the United States. Words are all they have left and their ideology is in tatters. Nationalism and defiance are all that remain.

Could it be Because Castro Corrupts the Minds of Men?

Castro has no corporate public relations mouthpiece to compete for influence in the media outside Cuba, no entertainment empire to shape values and perceptions of

young people, no recording industry or marketing gurus to shape public opinion outside Cuba about anything. But when Oliver Stone, Kevin Costner or Naomi Campbell does lunch with Castro, the embargo crowd goes ballistic.

Could it be Because Cuba will cost Americans their Jobs?

With the exception of sunshine in December, Cuba doesn't produce anything of value that could threaten U.S. market share of world trade if the embargo were lifted. Actually the balance of trade would be far in our favor. Cuba has little of importance to sell but needs everything, and that alone is why the embargo has been able to persist for so long. Cuban music has found a comfortable but obscure cultural niche that's unlikely to compete with MTV or BET. Cuba's peasant cuisine (rice and beans) won't lure Americans away from Boston Market and Popeye's.

Could it be Because Cuba is a One Party, Totalitarian and Communist Police State with Political Prisoners?

In spite of all the embargo rhetoric about the need to punish Castro for being a dictator and a stain on human rights, the truth is that U.S. foreign policy is un-burdened with such trifles. Republican and Democratic presidents and congress-people alike have advocated cruel dictators, hard-line Communists, petro-monarchs and rude oligarchs... and won accolades for doing so. Remember Nixon and Mao? Truman and Tito? Rumsfeld and Saddam Hussein? Constructive Engagement in South Africa, when Thatcher and Reagan said Mandela was a terrorist? What about support for Batista in Cuba, Ceausescu in Romania, Videla in Argentina, Pinochet in Chile, Diem in South Viet Nam, Marcos in the Philippines, Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, Somoza (our son of a *****) in Nicaragua, (Blowtorch Bob) d'Aubisson in El Salvador, Noriega the drug dealer in Panama, Papa and Baby Doc in Haiti, Musharif in Pakistan, the sadistic Shah of Iran, a series of death-squad military juntas in Guatemala, kleptomaniac Mobutu Sese Seko in Zaire, bin Laden and the Taliban in Afghanistan (Reagan and Sylvester Stallone thought they were freedom fighters)... the list of despots tolerated and encouraged by Washington is quite extensive and includes Cuba's former dictator himself, General Batista. What makes Cuba under the Castros worthy of unique treatment now?

Thirty-five years after 55,000 Americans were killed to keep the dominos from falling in south-east Asia, and when that failed, an economic embargo applied to make sure the Communists never recovered after being bombed back to the Stone Age, Nike has three footwear factories and Dominoes pizzas are falling on dinner tables in Vietnam, a one party, totalitarian Communist state.

Is it Because Cuba is Atheist, Denies Freedom of Religious Choice and Thought?

In 1992 the Cuban constitution dropped references to atheism. Catholicism, Santeria and Judaism are openly and freely practiced. Prominent churches on Havana's key 5th Avenue are open for worship seven days a week. In 1998 Pope John Paul, credited with bringing Communism down in Poland, met with Castro in Havana and stated that the U.S. embargo is "monstrously immoral." Jimmy Carter, outspoken on human rights issues everywhere, visited Cuba in 2002 and called for the embargo to be lifted. In 2003, Mikhail Gorbachev condemned the embargo in a Washington Post editorial "The Last Relic of the Cold War." Mr. President, it is inconceivable that, against the better judgment of these men, the embargo could have value as a tool to change Cuba for the better.

Could it be Because Castro Nationalized American Property Without Compensation?

Compensation claims in Cuba by nationals of Canada, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Spain and France were resolved long ago. The disruption of ties between the U.S. and Cuba, codified by the embargo, makes a compensation plan impossible and, using circuitous logic, serves as justification to continue the embargo. Complicating matters further, losses sustained by Cuba as a result of the embargo give Cuba a claim for damages and impede its ability to pay.

Mr. President,

Cuba's automotive fleet is the oldest in the world, a rolling museum. 60,000 specimens of battered, pre-1960 Detroit muscle and chrome roam the island, lost in a time warp. Maintained by home made spare parts, infinite patience and strong will, the ancient fleet has become a source of pride and a tourist attraction. It is also a metaphor for Cuba's political system and U.S. policy.

They all belong to another era. The ancient fleet, Cuba's political system and the U.S. embargo are all obsolete.

Now is the time, Mr. President, to drive us in a new direction. Now is the time for change we can believe in.

Daniel Bruno Sanz

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PREFACE

The limits of human longevity will achieve what ten U.S. administrations could not: the end of the Castro Era. Observers speculate endlessly about what will happen when the Castro brothers are dead and buried (or embalmed). How long can the Castros influence events from the grave? Will the Castros have an afterlife? To help answer this question, we need to get a grip on Cuba past and present. Who are the Cubans? What makes them tick?

For far too long, Cuba has been distorted through the monochrome lens of Cold War and Florida domestic politics. Florida, that bastion of intellectual rigueur, is home base of the Cuban diaspora and the Magic City is touted as *la segunda capital de los cubanos*. Freedom Tower is Miami's answer to Ellis Island.

But Cuban political upheaval and the exiles it generates were common hitherto the East-West conflict or the 20th century itself. Uncovering this remote history is essential to have an informed discussion about Cuba and the Castros today.

In New York City, at the Columbus Circle entrance to Central Park, there is a looming, gilded monument, proposed by yellow journalist William Randolph Hearst and funded by small donations from school children in 1913. It is dedicated to the 270 fallen sailors of the U.S.S. Maine, which was blown up in Havana harbor in 1898 under questionable circumstances. The grandiosity of the monument seems out of proportion to the smaller, less visible Central Park memorials to Civil War and W.W. I dead. These wars were certainly much more pivotal and costly than the Spanish-American War. Perhaps a psychologist could provide some insight.

Several hundred meters to the east at the top of 6th avenue, renamed Avenue of the Americas in 1945 by Mayor LaGuardia, sits an enormous bronze statue of one-time

Cuban exile and New York resident Jose Marti on his galloping horse at the moment he was assassinated by a Spanish officer in Cuba. The statue is flanked by equally impressive bronze behemoths of Bolivar and San Martin, gifts from Venezuela and Argentina in 1916 and 1950. Who are these heroes and why is the U.S.A. at odds with the governments of their nations today?

On January 20, 2009, in Washington, D.C., I stood on Pennsylvania Avenue and observed a remarkable lady walk down the center of the street. All eyes were upon her. She wore a lemongrass yellow wool lace shift dress with matching overcoat designed by one Isabel Toledo, a Cuban native. The unlikely prospect that Michelle Robinson of Chicago, better known as Michelle Obama, would make such a walk, along with the symbolism of her attire and unlikely fashion designer, were not lost upon me. If I were a babalao, I would divine the near presence of Ochun, ruler of the sweet waters of the world, its brooks, streams and rivers, and the embodiment of love and fertility. The youngest of the orishas, she retains the title of Iyalode (great queen.) She heals with her sweet waters and with honey, which she also owns. Her colors are yellow and gold. The rivers and streams she rules over always head towards her sister, Yemayá, but she does so on her own circuitous route, as rivers to the sea. The babbling brook and the flash flood reflect her changeable moods. She is the most beautiful of the orishas and once saved the world by luring Ogún out of the forests using her feminine wiles. In her manifestation as Ibú Ikolé, she saved the world from drought by flying up to heaven.

Michelle Obama's stroll in that yellow dress is an omen of great change coming to Cuba's relationship with the United States.

KUBLA KAHN

Little is known about the people who lived in Cuba before 1500. There is disagreement about whether the first Cubans left Florida and skipped down the keys or navigated to Cuba from the Orinoco Basin of South America. Ocean currents lend strength to the latter view. Dr. Fernando Ortiz wrote that “cubanacan” is the Taino word for “central place.” The Tainos moved from Quisqueya (Haiti) as they engaged in a power struggle with the Arawak and Siboney. When Cristobal Colon, a.k.a. Christopher Columbus, arrived in Cubanacan in October 1492, he christened the terra incognita as Juana (Joan). Convinced that he was on the Asian mainland, the land of Kubla Kahn, the name Cuba was adapted.

Colon’s diary was never published and the original is not extant. The Spanish empire’s heavy-handed censorship makes fact-finding elusive. In 1478 Spain’s King Ferdinand V and Queen Isabella, the benefactors of Colon’s voyage, requested that Pope Sixtus IV permit the Spanish Inquisition. Subsequently thousands of Spaniards were burned alive and in 1492 the Jews were expelled from Spain. The Iberian Peninsula languished in the Dark Ages.

By 1560 it was expressly prohibited “to print or sell any book on the Indies “without previous and special license” of the Crown, in addition to the Holy Inquisition’s ecclesiastical censorship of all printed matter. In 1641 the king of Spain decreed that no history books could be published in the Indies. Felipe IV went on to order that “No person of any country or rank whatsoever may send any book about the Indies, whether printed in Spain or elsewhere, to the Indies without prior authorization.”

So posterity is left with the brief remarks of the first Castellians to traverse the Antilles. Descriptions of the Lucayo tribe in the Bahamas; of the Cayos on the cays around Cuba; of the Guanajabibes of Pinar del Rio and the Island of Youth; of Siboney

to the east, Ciguayos and Caribes on Quisqueya and the Iñerri of Borinquen (Puerto Rico).

On August 2, 1492, three eighty-ton caravels left Sevilla and set sail for the Canary Islands. After various ship repairs and other preparations, they headed west in search of the westward passage to Asia. On the night of October 11, the Niña, the Pinta and the Santa Maria spotted land. They were in the Bahamas. Seventeen days later, they bumped into eastern Cubanacan. When Colon returned to Spain on January 4, 1493, several crewmembers stayed behind. On September 25, from Cádiz, Cristóbal Colón began his second voyage to Cuba. He brought 17 ships and 1,500 men, including missionaries, soldiers and laborers. There are about one hundred stowaways, as well as agricultural equipment, cattle and seeds. Among the crewmembers to return from the first voyage was Diego Velazquez de Cuellar (1465-1524) who would later become the Governor of Cuba and founder of both Havana and Santiago, Cuba's first capital, after subduing all Indo-Cuban resistance. In 1508 Sebastián de Ocampo circumnavigates Cuba and proves that it is an island and in 1509 Ponce de León begins the conquest of Puerto Rico. Juan de Esquivel, under orders of Cristobal Colon's son Diego, colonizes Jamaica.

Under the command of Diego Colon Moniz (1479-1526), Christopher Columbus's first born son and 4th Viceroy of the Indies, Velasquez defeated and captured the Taino commander Hatuey, putting an end to the latter's two year guerilla campaign to roll back Spanish power. Bartolome de las Casas later attributed the following speech to Hatuey: "Here is the God (pointing to a basket of gold and jewels) the Spaniards worship. For these they fight and kill, for these they persecute us and that is why we must drive them back into the sea. These tyrants tell us they adore a God of peace and equality, but they take our land and make us slaves. They speak of an immortal soul and eternal rewards, yet they take our belongings, seduce our women, violate our daughters... Incapable of matching our valor, these cowards cover themselves in iron that our weapons cannot break." Before the indigenous leader's execution, a Spanish priest asked him if he would accept Jesus and go to heaven. Hatuey asked if there were Spaniards in heaven. When the priest assured him that there were many, Hatuey replied: "If Christians go to heaven, I do not want to go." On February 2, 1512, Hatuey was burned at the stake. Indo-Cuban resistance was broken and on December 12 King Ferdinand thanks Diego Velásquez for the occupation of Cuba and for his "humane treatment of the natives."

In 1513 the African slave trade came to Cuba. Landowner Amador de Lares gets permission to bring four African slaves from Hispaniola. Cuba as we know it comes into existence.

The seminal events of the Spanish discovery of Cuba, the end of resistance in 1512 and the first African slave-based economy in the Americas in 1513 are the anvil, the hammer and the blast furnace that made Cuba. Let's use this epochal transition around 1500 as our starting point for future projections.

In 1514, Pánfilo de Narváez establishes the city of Havana. The city is named for San Cristóbal de Habana, a local chief. In 1519 conquistador Hernán Cortés prepares his fleet in Cuba and sets sail for Aztec Mexico. After the conquest, Havana becomes the natural stopping point for fleets returning to Spain.

On December 17 the first Catholic mass in Havana was held under a Ceiba tree and in 1520 the first large group of African slaves (300) arrive in Cuba to work in a mine named Jaugua. In 1533 the first recorded African slave revolt in Cuba takes place at the Jobabo gold mines. Four slaves battled a large military force until their death. Their heads were brought back to Bayamo to quiet the terrified colonists. In 1553 the Spanish Crown granted a license to a privileged group of merchants to import African slaves to Cuba because "of the laziness of the Cubans, who resist all kinds of work." The "laziness" was actually a form of passive resistance to colonization.

The reader may ask what this ancient, sordid history has to do with modern issues like human rights, elections, the embargo, the Castros' reign and U.S. - Cuba relations. The answer is that contemporary Cuban identity, religion, language, culture, economy and attitudes are the product of this history and the diplomat, businessman and others who would understand Cuba today must know it.

1.1 Resistance to Authority

Hatuey's legendary martyrdom would make actor Will Smith proud. Hatuey is the original anti-colonial icon. Today, he is considered the 'First National Hero' of Cuba and his personality has reincarnated itself through the centuries. We will return to Hatuey and his conditioned power as we dig into contemporary Cuban attitudes.

For two and a half centuries after the Spanish conquest of Cuba, the colony remained under Castilian control. Hernan Cortes launched the conquest of the Aztec

empire from Santiago de Cuba and the Spanish galleons laden with thousands of tons of gold and silver from Mexico and Peru made their way to Spain via Cuba. Over time, Cuba's domestic economy grew exponentially. In 1715 the Factoria (monopoly) was formed to purchase all Cuban tobacco at fixed prices and sell it abroad.

In 1717 the Estanco de Tobacco is established in Havana with offices in Bayamo, Trinidad and Santiago de Cuba. The proliferation of tobacco cultivation and slavery across Cuba set the stage for the "Insurrection of the Vegueros" (Sublevación de los Vegueros). More uprisings followed in 1720 and 1723. In 1727, three hundred slaves cast off their chains at Quiebra-Hacha, west of Havana. Massive force is used to beat back and prevent the revolt from spreading. In 1740, the Compania de Comercio, another Mercantilist royal monopoly, is created to handle the booming import/export business in Havana. It soon acquires a bad reputation with Cubans, who complain they are being fleeced and that commerce is restricted in order to keep prices high. Americans will recall the Boston Tea Party as a parallel in their own history.

It is plain to see that conquest, colonialism, exploitation, rebellion and power struggle define Cuba's past. Broad trends and mood swings revolve around these themes even if Cuban individuals today are oblivious to them.

Because of its topography and latitude, Cuba has a competitive advantage in agriculture. For centuries it produced an export surplus of sugar, tobacco and citrus. Today, agriculture in Cuba is in a shambles and Cuba is a net importer of foodstuffs, much of it from the United States through loopholes in the embargo put in place to placate midwestern agricultural interests. The rest comes from Europe. My observation is that less than 5% of the products (outside alcoholic derivatives of sugar) in Cuban stores originated in Cuba. This is a clue to the actual state of Cuban light industry. Imported foodstuffs are almost always high value-added, packaged and finished products. Elite Cuban consumers pay exorbitant prices with remittances sent to them from abroad. All remittances must be converted in to Cuban Convertible Pesos (CUC) to become legal tender. The CUC is pegged to a basket of real currencies including the Euro, Swiss Franc and the USD and is reset daily by the Cuban treasury and banking authority. It is neither a free-floating currency nor a managed currency. Its value is not affected by inflation, Cuba's current account, reserves or credit rating. It is a creature of administrative fiat similar to the tokens circulated in city transit authorities and it was created to supplant the USD in response to Bush Administration pressure on banks worldwide to refuse Cuban deposits in dollars.

The same pattern is in place throughout the Cuban domestic economy. Durable goods are imported already assembled, mostly from China. They are paid for via credits (loans) to Cuba granted by the government where the goods originate. Without these

credits, Cuban firms will not purchase. Cuban firms then retail the imports with a 272% mark up and generally take 270 days to settle accounts with foreign creditors.

This arrangement helps explain why Cuba must first be on good diplomatic and political terms with a foreign government in order to purchase products from private companies located in the same country. The notable exception is the U.S., which requires all payments in cash up front. Cuba plays ball to snub Miami and show the American business community that Cuba is a worthy customer and the embargo should end in the name of greater profits. How ironic.

Essentially, the Cuban domestic CUC market consists of the inflow of foreign products swapped for external funding transiting through the country while nominated as Cuban currency. Tourist spending also plays a role. Cuban labor productivity, wages, innovation, technology, savings and employment have no bearing on consumption, prices, quality or living standards in the CUC economy.

Cuban sugar production has collapsed in recent years. 50% of arable land remains fallow. Antiquated industry, lack of labor incentive and hurricanes are to blame. It is the most telling sign of Cuba's dysfunction.

In 1775, Cuba produced 4,700 tons of sugar, a record sum at that time. The labor-intensive sugar industry dominated the Caribbean and had an insatiable appetite for slave labor. Over time, a numerical majority of the inhabitants of English, French and Spanish Caribbean colonies, including Cuba, were slaves or freed slaves. Inspired by the French Revolution and the ensuing chaos in France, the Negro Republic of Haiti was established in 1804. The country was shunned and Haiti ceased being a sugar exporter. As a result, by 1839 little Cuba was the world's number one sugar producer and exporter. Cuban ingenios (sugar plantations) and fierce Spanish Mercantilism succeeded in creating a cash cow for the empire and Spanish law guarded it jealously. Cuba was prohibited from trading with foreign powers and all Cuban products had to be exported on Spanish vessels.

In 1900, Cuba was still the world's largest sugar producer. The pale sweet granules are to this island what wine is to France and pasta is to Italy. But the end of barter trade after 1990 and falling sugar prices (before 2005), as well as outmoded production techniques, plunged Cuba's sugar industry into an abyss. While modern sugar production employs state-of-the-art harvesting and processing techniques, much of Cuba's sugarcane is cut by hand with machetes. Horse-drawn carts transport supplies and 100-year-old steam generators power mills. In 2001, Cuba spent 17 cents to produce a one-pound bag of sugar worth 5 cents on the world market, one-third the price in 1985. As a result, half of Cuba's sugar mills were closed in 2002.

As we have seen, the cultivation of sugar in Cuba dates from the 16th century. It forms, as Cubans readily and fondly say, part of the national identity. Sugar dictated

land use and ownership patterns across the island. It was the rationale for slavery. Its production cycle set the rhythm of life that lasted for centuries. Sugar produced great wealth that made Havana and smaller urban centers such as Matanzas flourish, financing waves of architectural riches. The sugar industry brought railroads and the latest technology to Cuba. At different times, for better or worse, sugar dominated trade with Spain, the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. Even at the turn of the 21st century, sugar was still being produced in nearly every municipality – everywhere but Cuba’s western tip, where tobacco dominates, and the Isle of Youth. By sustaining nearly half a million jobs, sugar was the livelihood of one in five Cubans.



Cuban sugarcane, 1906

In 2002, when Pedro Alvarez, the chief executive of Cuba’s food importing company, (Alimport) stated matter-of-factly that Cuba had bought “tens of thousands” of tons of sugar from the United States and was looking to sign contracts to import 5,000–15,000 tons more, his words symbolized a paradigm shift in centuries-old patterns of economic activity. Cuba remains a net exporter of sugar, but the fact that it imports any sugar at all, and is now only the 10th largest sugar producer is a watershed in Cuban history.

The steep decline in the Cuban sugar industry should not come as a surprise. During the Soviet period of barter and coordinated Five Year Plans, Cuban sugar traded at the equivalent of 40 cents per pound, well more than double market prices at the time, yielding an effective subsidy of \$3 billion per year. In some years, Cuba could afford to

re-export some of the oil that its sugar earned. “Nothing was more favorable than sugar production,” a Cuban economist says, “it was reality, but it was virtual reality.”

What did the emphasis on sugar production achieve? It mechanized the preparation of sugar fields and 75% of cane cutting. It mechanized 100% of cane transport. It led to the construction of seven new mills and new investment in research, development, and production of products derived from sugar or bagasse (cane waste material). Between 1976 and 1990, sugar represented three-fourths Cuban of exports and 20% of the economy’s total investments. By the early 1990’s, the sugar industry held 30 percent of the nation’s industrial machinery and bought 20% of the production of the steel and machinery sector, 13% of the production of the ministry of basic industries and 8% of light industry output.

In light of the U.S. embargo, the demise of the Soviet bloc robbed Cuba of much more than favorable terms of trade. It left Cuba dependent on a defunct, sole source of tractors, fuel, fertilizers and other critical supplies for a huge, mechanized sugar industry designed to barter with an extinct market. The same scenario played out throughout all sectors of the economy, plunging Cuba into an unprecedented depression. Sugar production fell by three million tons, falling 39% between 1992 and 1993. Lower revenues caused investment and maintenance to falter, leading to a downward spiral of de-capitalization and further drops in output. During this period, the U.S. tightened the embargo with the Mack and Helms-Burton Amendments, compounding the depression. Faced with these new challenges, Cuba’s large-scale, oil-dependent, heavily mechanized farming, which had hitherto produced the bulk of Cuba’s sugar, was now obsolete. After the embargo is lifted, sorely needed capital investment will return, spurred by the potential for Cuban ethanol exports to the U.S. market.

1. 2 Cuban Biotechnology

Cuba is famous for its premium cigars and mass sugar production, but is less well known for its formidable pharmaceuticals industry. With more than 7,000

scientists dedicated to drug research, Cuba has one of the most sophisticated biotech industries in the developing world. In 2003, Cuba earned \$350 million from the exportation of 180 different Cuban medicines. After Ronald Reagan reinforced the embargo in 1982, Cuba had to rely on its own biotech industry to produce unavailable drugs. The Cuban biotech industry was accelerated.

A Cuban Research Institute has patented a promising new lung cancer drug. The drug is called CimaVax EGF and in clinical trials it has been shown to increase life expectancy in lung cancer patients by 4-5 months. Researchers claim that those who use CimaVax EGF “breathe easier, experience less fatigue, less pain and increased appetite.” It is administered in conjunction with conventional treatments of chemo and radiotherapy.

1.3 Cuba was a Superpower Pawn Centuries Before Kennedy and Khrushchev

After the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1688, the British and French empires became the pre-eminent military powers and both rivals were determined to vanquish the other. Warfare and intrigue in the Americas were constant. One native of the British colony of Virginia received his officer’s apprenticeship fighting the French in British Canada during the Seven Years’ War (1756-1763). His name was George Washington.

Using Cuba as a launch pad, the British could assault French New Orleans and in 1762 the British Navy captured Havana with 2000 unwilling sailors pressed into service from the colonies of New York, New Jersey and Rhode Island. The Union Jack flew over El Morro de la Habana and Cubans were British subjects just like their counterparts in the 13 colonies to the north. Cuba almost became a permanent part of the English-speaking world.

But in 1763 Cuba was ceded back to Spain in exchange for claim over Florida. Of course, the Cubans were not consulted any more than the Florida Seminoles were. But the experience left Cubans with a new interest in the colonies that would soon become the United States. The Criollos (native-born Cubans of Spanish descent) chafed under the same burdens as their British colonial counterparts. In 1778 Juan de Miralles, a Cuban trader, established himself in Philadelphia and befriended George Washington and his wife, Martha Custis Washington. He threw a ball in their honor and dreamed of

independence for Cuba. The Spanish Crown became alarmed as the winds of change undermined the British crown and in 1778 decreed, “neither the natives nor the colonists of America shall study, observe or write about material relating to the colonies.” Cuban fascination with the American Revolution was undeterred. Francisco Miranda, of Caracas Venezuela, led Cubans on an attack of the British garrison at Pensacola, Florida. Then, in April of 1782, Jose Antonio Aponte, a free Afro-Cuban and Havana native, captured Providence (Nassau), Bahamas from the British with a battalion of mulatto and black troops.

Cubans donated money enthusiastically to the Continental Congress of the United States after George Washington’s victory at Yorktown. Victorious democratic revolution in the thirteen colonies was followed by revolution in France (1789). Spain itself was then conquered by Napoleon’s armies in 1808 and France defeated Spain in Haiti (1804) but the victory degenerated in to a Vietnam style rout for Napoleon as malaria infected French troops were unable to subdue forces led by Toussaint L’Ouverture. In France, Divine Right was trampled by Liberte, Egalite et Fraternite, to the tune of the Marsaille and Robespierre’s guillotine. The Spanish crown fled into exile as French troops advanced on Madrid. Revolution echoed across the Americas from Mexico to Argentina as an enfeebled Spanish Empire could no longer rule her colonies on the American continents. But the small islands of Cuba and Puerto Rico remained under Spanish control.

Unlike the other newly independent states of the Americas, the United States itself became a global empire en route to super-power status. As early as 1805, Thomas Jefferson wrote that Cuba should be controlled by the United States. In 1809 Napoleon was on the move and the Spanish monarchy could not maintain control of Spain, let alone the Spanish colonies. Sensing weakness, President Madison put diplomatic pressure on Spain to cede Cuba to the U.S.A.

The United States has maintained bipolar views of Cuba over the years. The Antebellum Slave Power was determined to add Cuba as a slave state to help offset the growing number of Free States in the congress. Northern states resisted this move. After the Civil War, southern states resisted adding Cuba as a U.S. state because its population was too dark. Both northern and southern states were united in opposition to encroaching European empires in the western hemisphere. The 1823 Monroe Doctrine has withstood the test of time and remains relevant today.

As Romanticism captured the spirit of the times in Europe, the Cubans created their own movement: Siboneyism. It was the artistic expression of their political and social protest. The movement was universal and congealed the Cuban identity. Nueva Trova is its modern form. It exalted the original Indo-Cuban resistance to colonization

as the crucible of Cuban political attitudes. It encompassed the formation of Cuban nationalism, the key to understanding Cuba today.

1.4 Time Line of Cuba U.S. Relations

1791—1804 François Dominique Toussaint L'Ouverture organizes a slave revolt to take over Hispaniola. Some of the French landowners fled to Cuba, creating more plantations with subsequent increased demand for slaves. To meet this demand, Spain allows foreign vessels to transport slaves to the island. Most of the slave transports are American-owned.

1795: A slave revolt in Cuba frightens U.S. slave owners because whites and Negroes joined forces to demand emancipation.

1796: After Spain suppresses the revolt, it ends commercial relations between Cuba and the U.S.A. Over the next seven years, Cuban ports would be opened and closed to trade several times. During the Napoleonic era (1792-1815), trade between the U.S.A. and Cuba increased considerably as Cuba's sugar harvest grew in size.

1809: U.S. president Thomas Jefferson sent General James Wilkinson to Spain to try and purchase Cuba. "I candidly confess that I have ever looked upon Cuba as the most interesting addition that can be made to our system of States," Jefferson wrote to his successor, James Madison. With Cuba and Canada, he said, "we should have such an empire for liberty as she has never surveyed since the creation."

Joaquín Infante plans to overthrow the Spanish government in Cuba. In response, the Spanish authorities use prison, exile, torture and death to quell insurrections.

1810: U.S. President James Madison instructs his minister to Great Britain to warn the British that the United States will not sit idly by if Britain were to try to gain possession of Cuba.

1817: Thomas Jefferson wrote, “If we seize Cuba, we will be masters of the Caribbean.”

1818: The King of Spain issues a royal decree declaring free trade in Cuba. Spain allows Cuban ports to open for international trade. Within two years, over half of Cuba’s trade is with the United States, her largest trading partner.

1823: U.S. Secretary of State John Quincy Adams defines U.S. policy towards Cuba, writing, “These islands (Cuba and Puerto Rico) are natural appendages of the North American continent, and one of them (Cuba) almost within sight of our shores, from a multitude of considerations has become an object of transcendent importance to the commercial and political interests of our Union. These are laws of political as well as physical gravitation.” Later as president, Adams predicted Cuba would fall “like a ripening plum into the lap of the union.”

In a letter to Minister to Spain Hugh Nelson, Secretary of State John Quincy Adams says the U.S. will annex Cuba within half a century, despite obstacles: “Cuba, forcibly disjoined from its own unnatural connection with Spain, and incapable of self support, can gravitate only towards the North American Union, which by the same law of nature cannot cast her off from its bosom.” Cubans call this policy *la fruta madura* (ripe fruit).

1823: In December, U.S. President James Monroe declares the Western Hemisphere as a U.S. sphere of influence and warns Europe not to interfere in the affairs of any American nations that have recently become independent. This became known as the Monroe Doctrine.

1825: Governments in the recently independent countries of Mexico and Venezuela plan a military expedition to support Cuban independence. U.S. Secretary of State Henry Clay warns that the U.S.A. will block any move to liberate Cuba from Spain. The U.S. government believed that Cuba would become part of the United States. The Slave Power feared an independent Cuba would lead to the end of slavery that could have repercussions in the Southern states.

1847: In January, U.S. citizens and “Manifest Destiny” advocates Moses Beach and John O’Sullivan meet in Havana to conspire with members of the Club de la Habana, a group of wealthy Cubans seeking annexation to the U.S.

1848: Against the counsel of Democrats opposed to extending slavery, U.S.

President James Polk secretly offers to buy Cuba from Spain for \$100 million. Spain refuses. In May, American Democrats nominate Senator Lewis Cass, who has publicly advocated the purchase of Cuba, for president.

1850: Spanish general Narciso Lopez gathers a mercenary force of 600 and leaves from New Orleans in an attempt to conquer Cuba on behalf of Americans who wanted to annex the island. Lopez failed and fled. He returned a few months later to try again, was caught and executed.

1851: Associates of the late López formed a secret society called the “Order of the Lone Star.” Their goal is to incorporate Cuba into the U.S. Starting in New Orleans, they soon have fifty chapters in eight Southern states with an estimated membership of 15,000 to 20,000.

1852: The Order of the Lone Star plans to invade Cuba in the summer, in conjunction with the “Conspiracy of Vuelta Abajo,” a revolt organized by Francisco de Frias, López’s wealthy brother-in-law. Spain discovers the conspiracy and executes Frias, while some of the conspirators escape to the U.S. This year Spain refuses a second request from the U.S.A. to sell Cuba. On October 22, the New York Times declares, “The Cuban question is now the leading one of the time.”

1853: Abolitionist Marquis Juan de la Pezuela is appointed Captain General of Cuba. General John Quitman, Governor of Mississippi, accepts \$1 million from a group of New York businessmen to invade Cuba.

1854: U.S. President Franklin Pierce offers to buy Cuba for \$130 million, as per the Ostend Manifesto. The manifesto warns against permitting “Cuba to be Africanized with all its attendant horrors to the white race.” It also suggests the U.S. “shall be justified in wresting it from Spain...” if Spain refuses to sell, “upon the very same principle that would justify an individual in tearing down the burning house of his neighbor if there were no other means of preventing the flames from destroying his own home.”

In April, influential Cuban slave owners meet in Havana with U.S. Consul William H. Robertson and urge him to persuade U.S. President Pierce to send American troops to Cuba to prevent slave emancipation.

1865: The victory of the north in the U.S. Civil War ends importation of slaves from the U.S.A. into Cuba. Instead, Cuban landowners and businessmen import

Chinese coolies and Mexican Indians to work the fields. Although the African slave trade to Cuba ends, slavery itself continues on the island until 1886.

1868: The Ten Years' War, or Cuba's First War of Independence, begins on October 10 when plantation owner Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, accompanied by 37 other planters, proclaims the independence of Cuba in the Grito de Yara issued from his plantation. Céspedes frees and arms his slaves. Two free Black brothers, Antonio and José Maceo, join the rebel ranks.

1869: On April 10, 1869, the first constituent assembly prepares the first Constitution of the Republic of Cuba and elects Carlos Manuel de Céspedes as the first president. President Grant and his cabinet, led by Secretary of State Hamilton Fish, oppose recognition of the new Cuban government. Fish tells the Cuban revolutionary representative the U.S. will "observe perfect good faith to Spain." The U.S. House of Representatives adopts a resolution to recognize the new Cuban government by a vote of 98 to 25 but Grant ignores it. Former Confederate General Thomas Jordan lands in Cuba and is made Cuban Chief-of-Staff.

1872: President Ulysses S. Grant rejects a proposal that offers Cuban independence and the abolition of slavery. Despite official sanctions, American civilians profit by selling guns to the rebels. Late in 1872, Spanish officials board the *Virginius* and arrest Americans for running guns to the rebels. In November twelve of them are executed. In September, Colombian Foreign Minister Don Gil Colunje proposes all Latin American republics and the United States work together for Cuban independence and the abolition of slavery. President Grant rejects the plan.

1874: Following the death of Céspedes, Cuban rebels ask for and are denied U.S. recognition. In 1878 the rebels reluctantly sign a peace agreement with Spain.

1875: U.S. Secretary of State Hamilton Fish asks England to lead a European force to restore peace in Cuba.

1870: The remaining Cuban forces surrender to Spain and the Ten Years' War officially ends.

1879-80: The "Little War" ("La Guerra Chiquita") continued the rebellion in parts of Cuba.

1880: 83 percent of Cuban exports are sold to the U.S; 6 percent go to Spain.

1881: U.S. Secretary of State James G. Blaine writes of Cuba, “that rich island, the key to the Gulf of Mexico, and the field for our most extended trade in the Western Hemisphere, is, though in the hands of Spain, a part of the American commercial system... If ever ceasing to be Spanish, Cuba must necessarily become American and not fall under any other European domination.” José Martí is exiled in New York from 1881 to 1895.

1886: Slavery is abolished in Cuba.

1890s: William Randolph Hearst publishes sensational and inflammatory stories about Cuba.

1891: On May 16, The Detroit Free Press writes: “Cuba would make one of the finest states in the Union, and if American wealth, enterprise and genius once invaded the superb island, it would become a veritable hive of industry in addition to being one of the most fertile gardens of the world. There is a strong party growing up in the island in favor of reciprocity with and annexation to the United States. We should act at once and make this possible.”

1892: Martí forms the Cuban Revolutionary Party.

1894: The Great Crash of 1894 devastates the Cuban tobacco industry.

1895: As another Cuban war of independence looms, the U.S. government detains three Cuban ships laden with \$58,000 in arms and supplies for the rebels, dealing them a major setback. While President Grover Cleveland proclaims neutrality in the conflict between Cuba and Spain, U.S. firms sell munitions to Spain. In February, fighting breaks out in Cuba under the leadership of the Cuban Revolutionary Party and the Second War of Cuban Independence begins. On May 19, his first day of battle, José Martí is killed.

1896: The U.S. and Spain discuss granting Cuba autonomy, but not independence.

1897: Despite the rebels’ success and their declaration they had won the war, U.S. President William McKinley will not recognize Cuban independence. Undersecretary of War J.C. Breckenridge writes a memo (the Breckenridge Memorandum) outlining U.S. policy towards Cuba: “...we must clean up the country,

even if this means using the methods Divine Providence used on the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. We must destroy everything within our cannons' range of fire. We must impose a harsh blockade so that hunger and its constant companion, disease, undermine the peaceful population and decimate the Cuban army... we must create conflicts for the independent government.... These difficulties must coincide with the unrest and violence among the aforementioned elements, to whom we must give our backing... our policy must always be to support the weaker against the stronger, until we have obtained the extermination of them both, in order to annex the Pearl of the Antilles." In November, Spain's queen regent offers autonomy to Cuba, but both the rebels and Cuban loyalists reject the offer.

1898: President McKinley offers to buy Cuba for \$300 million.

The U.S.S. Maine is sent to Havana during the Second War of Independence on a "friendly visit" to protect American citizens and business. The captain and most of the officers were on leave when the Maine subsequently exploded, killing 266 American sailors. It was the *causus belli* President McKinley and the Congress needed for intervention and the Spanish-American War began.

To no avail, Spain concedes to every U.S. demand except Cuban independence.

In April, the U.S. Congress declares Cuba has the "right to be free and independent," and authorizes the president to use military force to oust Spain from the island. The Teller Amendment declares the U.S. has no "intention to exercise sovereignty, jurisdiction, or control over said Island except for the pacification thereof." President McKinley signs the declaration.

President McKinley declares a blockade of the northern coast of Cuba and the port of Santiago. Spain declares war and the U.S. follows suit.

Assistant Secretary of State Theodore Roosevelt, a neophyte, urges U.S. intervention. He leads 6,000 Rough Riders to Santiago and defeats Spanish forces. In June, a battalion of U.S. Marines camps in Guantánamo Bay. That month an editorial in the Chicago Tribune writes of Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines as future American colonies: "All of these islands will belong to us by sovereign right of honorable conquest. They will be American soil from the moment the Stars and Stripes float over

them. Annexation of all three is the natural outcome.” The U.S. attacks and sinks several Spanish ships attempting to break the blockade and captures 1,670 Spanish soldiers. Spain sues for peace.

In July, an editorial in the Cleveland Leader favors annexation of Cuba: “While our government disavowed a purpose of conquest, it may be absolutely necessary for us to keep Cuba and make it a part of the United States.” In mid-August, Spain and the U.S. sign an armistice. There is no Cuban representative.

In December, the U.S. administered Cuban Educational Association declares that only some Cubans are fit to be Americanized and that dark skinned Cubans could not gain admission to many American universities and colleges.

The Treaty of Paris formalizes U.S. control of Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines and Guam. Although the treaty officially grants Cuba independence, the U.S. flag is raised over Havana. Cuban dreams of independence remain frustrated.

1899 Cuba is a U.S. protectorate until 1902 and again in 1906-09. The first military governor is General John R. Brooke. He pays the rebels \$3 million to disband, about \$75 each.

Official recruiting posters for the U.S. Army ask for recruits to join “Uncle Sam’s Personally Conducted Excursion to his new possessions Manila, Cuba and Porto Rico.” The USD becomes legal tender in Cuba.

In December, President McKinley declares, “the destinies of Cuba are in some rightful form and manner irrevocably linked to our own...”

1900 General Leonard Wood, the new U.S. military governor in Cuba, drafts a constitution that includes an amendment by U.S. Senator Orville Platt that guarantees the U.S. the right to intervene in Cuban domestic affairs. It also obligates Cuba to lease in perpetuity the naval base at Guantanamo Bay. Cuba must “maintain a low public debt; refrain from signing any treaty impairing its obligation to the United States; to grant to the United States the right of intervention to protect life, liberty, and property; validate the acts of the military government; and, if requested, provide long-term naval leases.” Platt would later write, “Cubans are incapable of stable self-government. In many respects, they are like children.” He builds Havana’s Malecon.

1901: General Wood calls for elections that exclude women and coloreds.

1902: The restricted Cuban electorate elects Tomás Estrada Palma as Cuba's first president. Estrada had been a proponent of U.S. annexation, saying he saw, "little advantage and no future for an independent Cuba." U.S. troops withdraw.

1903: The United Fruit Company buys 200,000 acres for \$400,000. The naval base at Guantanamo is opened and Cuba is paid \$2,000 a year in gold coin. In March, Cuba and the U.S. sign a commercial reciprocity treaty. In July a treaty is signed to allow the U.S. to create coaling and naval bases in Cuba.

1906: Accused of election fraud, Tomás Estrada Palma invokes the Platt amendment and requests U.S. intervention. The U.S. sends 2,000 Marines and 5,600 soldiers to re-occupy the country and military rule extends until late 1908, overseen by Secretary of War William Taft. Taft is Acting Governor until replaced by a civilian, Charles Magoon. President Teddy Roosevelt issues an executive order that Cuba's provisional governor comes under the direct supervision of the Secretary of War. Taft removes representatives elected in 1905 and 1906 and declares new elections will be held when "tranquility and public confidence are fully restored."

1908: Magoon establishes a commission to organize and compile Cuban law, hitherto a jumble of Spanish codes, military orders and decrees. He also creates the Cuban Armed Forces

1909: Magoon steps down and Jose Miguel Gomez becomes president. U.S. President Taft and Secretary of State Philander Knox adapt a "preventive" interpretation of the Platt Amendment to allow U.S. diplomatic intervention to avoid the necessity of military intervention.

1911: A U.S. inquiry into the explosion on the U.S.S. Maine determines the cause was likely an accidental fire inside a coalbunker that spread to a nearby powder magazine.

1912: Cuban president General Jose Miguel Gomez suppresses the Agrupación Independiente de Color (Independent Colored Party) with the help of U.S. Marines. 3,000 Cubans are killed. Cuban Negroes are excluded from much of Cuba's national life, although they have access to government jobs in the Rural Guard and the army. They are excluded from politics.

U.S. military forces take control of the Cuban government in order to “protect American interests.” U.S. Marines land in Cuba and two U.S. battleships dock at Havana. President William Howard Taft declares this act does not constitute intervention.

1916: General Mario García Menocal of the Conservative Republicans wins the presidential election via fraud and intimidation.

1917: President Woodrow Wilson sends U.S. troops to Cuba to “protect American interests” and Menocal. Cuba enters World War I one day after the U.S. enters the war. U.S. Marines enter to train on the island. Some remain until 1922.

1918-1919: Cuba produces 4 million tons of sugar, 89% of all exports.

1920: In the post W.W. I boom, sugar soars to 22 cents/pound, followed by a plunge to less than four cents. Cuban plantations go bankrupt and are scooped up by U.S. investors at bargain prices.

García Menocal uses fraud to win the presidential election.

1921: President Wilson sends General Enoch Crowder to organize new Cuban elections. He goes on to become the personal representative of the new U.S. President, Warren Harding. Alfredo Zayas becomes president.

1922: Crowder chooses Zayas’s Cabinet.

1923: General Crowder negotiates a J.P. Morgan loan to the Cuban government and is named permanent ambassador to Cuba. Zayas dismisses the Crowder Cabinet and appoints his own.

In *March*, the U.S. Senate ratifies the 1903 treaty to return the Isle of Pines to Cuba. The Communist Party of Cuba is founded and General Gerardo Machado Morales is elected president on a nationalist platform.

1924: Total U.S. investment in Cuba stands at \$1.24 billion.

1925: Crowder, with historian Charles Chapman, writes *A History of the Cuban Republic: A Study in Hispanic American Politics*. The book attacks Zayas. Gerardo Machado, a favorite of business interests, deports 400 labor leaders.

1928: U.S. heiress Irene Dupont purchases several hundred acres at Varadero Beach to build the mansion Xanadu.

1929: The Cuban Congress passes a bill stating “any Cuban who seeks the intervention or interference of a foreign power in the internal or external development of the national life” will be imprisoned for life. President Machado vetoes it.

1933: Machado resigns as president. With the support of U.S. Ambassador Sumner Welles, Carlos Manuel de Céspedes is appointed provisional president. The military, militant students and revolutionary groups are opposed. In September, the Sergeants’ Revolt breaks out, supported by students and led by Sergeant Fulgencio Batista y Zaldívar. Batista quickly overthrows President Céspedes.

Ramon Grau-San-Martin is named provisional president in September. He establishes an eight-hour workday with a minimum salary, maternity benefits, and paid vacations. He enacts child labor laws and female suffrage laws. Grau confiscates sugar mills for breaking the new minimum wage laws. He rejects the Platt Amendment.

In September, Welles requests U.S. military intervention. F.D.R. sends 29 warships to Cuba and Key West. Marines are put on standby. The U.S. does not recognize the government of Grau.

1934: U.S.-backed Colonel Fulgencio Batista overthrows Grau after 120 days in office. Batista is president for 32 hours before putting Carlos Mendieta in power. The U.S. government recognizes Mendieta. Batista remains army chief and continues to appoint new presidents until 1940.

The Guantanamo Bay lease is extended to 99 years at an annual rate of \$ 4,085,000. President Roosevelt abrogates the 1903 treaty with Cuba that gives the United States the right to intervene to preserve internal stability or independence.

1938: Batista offers Meyer Lansky and the Mafia control of Havana’s racetracks and casinos in exchange for kickbacks.

1940: Batista becomes president via the ballot box.

1944: Batista retires and moves to Daytona Beach, Florida.

1945: Cuba joins the United Nations on the day the U.N. Charter takes effect.

1946: Mafia bosses meet at the Hotel Nacional.

1948: Cuban students train to invade the nearby Dominican Republic and depose the brutal Trujillo. Washington learns of the plans and pressures the Cuban army to clamp down on the students and stop the operation. Fidel Castro is involved. Batista runs in Cuban senatorial elections from his home in Florida and wins.

1952: Batista runs for president but polls predict his defeat. Meyer Lansky offers President Carlos Prío a bribe of \$250,000 to step down. Batista organizes a nearly bloodless coup and is recognized by the Truman Administration. Batista suspends the 1940 constitution.

1953: Batista awards contracts to dozens of U.S. corporations for massive construction projects like the Havana-Varadero highway in return for kickbacks.

On *July 26*, Fidel Castro and his men attack the Moncada barracks in Santiago. Seventy rebels are killed and the rest tortured or imprisoned, including Fidel and Raúl Castro.

Santos Trafficante Jr. takes control of casinos in Havana.

1954: U.S. Vice President Richard Nixon visits Havana to congratulate Batista on winning presidential elections in which he ran unopposed. Nixon is photographed with Batista and Mafia personalities at a lavish party.

1955: C.I.A. director Allen Dulles visits Havana and helps Batista open an intelligence bureau funded and supervised by the C.I.A. The C.I.A. and its director John Foster Dulles maintain strong ties to the United Fruit Company.

Batista offers amnesty to political prisoners. Castro is released and flees to Mexico. He organizes the Granma expedition with Raul and Che Guevara, an Argentinian.

Castro and his eighty-one men sneak in to Cuba to start a revolutionary war and seize power. Most are killed or captured, but Castro and the survivors flee to the Sierra Maestra.

1957: At the invitation of Santos Trafficante, Senator John Kennedy visits Havana and is allegedly entertained by three prostitutes while Trafficante observes through a two-way mirror. There is no evidence or proof of this.

U.S. Ambassador Arthur Gardener recommends the assassination of Fidel Castro. In February, U.S. journalist Herbert Matthews meets with Castro in the Sierra Maestra and his sympathetic reports are published in the New York Times.

1958: Fidel Castro and his forces defeat the Cuban army in several small battles. The U.S. embargoes arms shipments to Cuba. In February, the U.S. indicts former Cuban President Carlos Prío on charges of conspiring to violate U.S. neutrality laws by financing and taking part in military expeditions to be carried out from U.S. territory against Batista. In December, William Pawley, an emissary from the Eisenhower Administration, meets with Batista to suggest exile in Daytona Beach.

1959: January 1. Batista flees to the Dominican Republic.

Santos Trafficante meets with future Lee Harvey Oswald assassin Jack Ruby in Havana. Castro imprisons Trafficante and in June deports him to the U.S.

Manuel Urrutia, a Cuban judge, takes over as president and Miro Cardona, head of the Havana Bar Association, as Prime Minister. Fidel Castro is named Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. Castro soon replaces Cardona as Prime Minister. After increasing friction between Castro and Urrutia over Communist influence in Cuba, Urrutia resigns.

In *February*, Robert Nye, an American, is arrested with a sniper rifle. A C.I.A. memo from J.C. King, head of the Western Hemisphere Desk of the C.I.A., recommends “dirty tactics” to destabilize Cuba.

In *March*, Castro nationalizes the Cuban Telephone Company, an affiliate of I.T.T.

In *April*, Prime Minister Castro makes an unofficial visit to the United States. He tells the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that good relations must be based on “full equality.” At a luncheon of newspaper editors broadcast on radio and television, he complains about unfair sugar trade. Eisenhower refuses to meet Castro and sends Vice-President Nixon. Castro tells Nixon, “Dictatorships are a shameful blot on

America and democracy is more than just a word,” adding that there is no democracy while there is hunger, unemployment and injustice.

Castro speaks at Columbia, Harvard and Princeton and tells U.N. correspondents the Cuban revolution is “not for export.”

The Cuban government passes its first Agrarian Reform Law and puts limits on land ownership. It expropriates holdings and offers a 20-year bond at 4.5 percent as compensation.

U.S. Senator George Smathers proposes a reduction in the Cuban sugar quota. The U.S. government rejects the Agrarian Reform Law and the bond as insufficient

In *November*, Che Guevara becomes president of the National Bank of Cuba.

1960: In January Cuba expropriates 70,000 acres of U.S. property, including 35,000 acres owned by the United Fruit Company.

February: Soviet Deputy Prime Minister Anastas Mikoyan visits Havana. Castro negotiates a barter deal to trade sugar for crude oil. The U.S.S.R. extends \$100 million in credit. At the request of the U.S. State Department, U.S. oil companies refuse to refine Soviet oil. Castro then nationalizes the refineries. In response, the U.S. cancels Cuban sugar quotas (half the crop) and prohibits most exports to Cuba. About US\$1 billion of U.S.-owned assets is nationalized.

J.C. King again recommends that the C.I.A. assassinate Castro. In March, President Eisenhower tells C.I.A. chief Dulles to train Cuban exiles for an invasion of Cuba and endorses a plan to overthrow Castro in favor of a regime “more acceptable to the U.S... in such a manner as to avoid any appearance of U.S. intervention.” The plan calls for a “massive propaganda offensive,” including radio broadcasts. The C.I.A. creates the Democratic Revolutionary Front, the first of many Cuban exile political front groups.

U.S. pilot Robert E. Frost is killed while bombing a sugar mill in Matanzas province. Documents found in the wreckage reveal that he had invaded Cuban territory on three previous occasions. The U.S. State Department acknowledged the flight originated in the U.S. and expresses regrets.

March: A consortium of Western European banks yields to U.S. pressure and cancels a \$100 million loan to Cuba.

April: Cuba expropriates the remainder of land owned by United Fruit. Castro declares Cuba a socialist state.

July: The U.S. Congress votes to terminate Cuba's sugar quota. Cuba nationalizes all remaining U.S. business and commercial interests in Cuba. China agrees to buy 500,000 tons of Cuban sugar annually for five years.

September: The U.S. government advises its citizens living in Cuba to return. Prime Minister Castro responds by urging U.S. citizens to stay.

The Cuban delegation to the U.N. provides a list of 20 terrorist incidents and asks the Security Council to stop U.S. aggression. The Cuban delegation is evicted from its New York hotel and moves to the Hotel Theresa in Harlem at no charge. Malcolm X, Gamel Nasser and Nikita Khrushchev visit Castro there.

On *September 29*, Castro's Cubana Airlines plane is impounded for debts to American creditors. Khrushchev supplies a Soviet plane to fly the Cubans home.

Johnny Roselli and Sam Giancana meet with Allen W. Dulles about assassinating Fidel Castro.

October: The Urban Reform Law nationalizes all commercially owned real estate. Electric, bank and telephone companies are nationalized. About 200 small U.S.-owned companies are exempted.

F.B.I. Director J. Edgar Hoover sends a memo to Richard Bissell, C.I.A. chief of covert operations, indicating Hoover's knowledge of Chicago crime boss Sam Giancana's plot to assassinate Fidel Castro.

The U.S. requests that Canada embargo Cuba.

In *October*, the U.S. imposes an embargo on exports to Cuba, food and medicine excepted. The embargo includes foreign subsidiaries of U.S. firms. The initial purpose of the sanctions is "to destabilize the Castro regime, causing its overthrow, or, at a minimum, to make an example of the regime by inflicting as much damage on it

as possible.” The U.S. also blacklists vessels carrying U.S. government-financed cargo to and from Cuba. In October, President Eisenhower endorses the embargo and bans all exports to Cuba, partly to assist Richard M. Nixon’s presidential bid. In response, Nixon’s Democratic opponent John F. Kennedy promises, “to do something about Fidel Castro.”

November 1961 U.S. author Arthur Whitridge writes, “Either the United States had to support corrupt governments in office or permit revolutions that were bound to cause suffering to the population.”

Meyer Lansky puts a one million-dollar price on Castro’s head.

President John Kennedy approves an invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs. 1,500 Cuban exiles land on Cuba from U.S.-funded and supplied training camps in Nicaragua. Before the invasion, U.S.-based terrorists burn thousands of acres of Cuban sugar cane and blow up a Belgian ship in Havana harbor. They launch sorties from B-26 bombers, killing hundreds of Cuban civilians (Operation Puma). Castro’s forces defeat the invasion in 72 hours. Cuban exiles would call Kennedy’s failure to provide combat forces a betrayal and subsequent to J.F.K.’s assassination, evidence would surface of their involvement in his murder. Twelve hundred exiles were captured and one hundred and fourteen killed at the Bay of Pigs (Playa Giron.) The C.I.A. had predicted that the invasion would spark a popular uprising and overthrow Castro. Clearly, the C.I.A. had not studied Fidel’s 1953- 54 prison letters, which I analyze in this book.

In *January*, the U.S. breaks off all diplomatic relations with Cuba. Castro acknowledges his revolution is Marxist-Leninist. President Kennedy launches a verbal attack on Cuba at the American Society of Newspaper Editors.

In *late 1961*, President Kennedy approves Operation Mongoose to topple Castro, using “terrorism and subversion” and finally invoking U.S. military intervention to “overthrow the Castro regime.” The Mexican ambassador to the U.S. rejects Kennedy’s attempt to organize collective action against Cuba, saying, “if we publicly declare that Cuba is a threat to our security, 40 million Mexicans will die laughing.”

One-quarter of the Cuban buses are out of operation for want of spare parts by late 1961.

The C.I.A. and the Catholic Church launch “Operation Peter Pan,” the largest

exodus of children in the Western Hemisphere. From December 26, 1960 through October 22, 1962, 14,048 unaccompanied children between 6 and 18 years old were sent to the U.S. The C.I.A. alleges that the Cuban government takes children away from their parents for indoctrination in Communist schools.

1962: Early in the year, the U-2 spy plane begins operations over Cuba.

Cuba is expelled from the O.A.S. on the grounds that Marxist-Leninist ideology is incompatible with the inter-American system. The U.S. starts a comprehensive trade embargo against Cuba. The O.A.S. votes to suspend trade in military goods with Cuba. Cuba asks the U.N. Security Council to suspend O.A.S. measures but the U.N. doesn't intervene. The Soviet Union fills the vacuum.

October: The Cuban Missile Crisis brings the world to the precipice of Armageddon.

Pope John XXIII excommunicates Castro. Another C.I.A. operation approved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in February - Operation Bingo - calls for faking a Cuban attack on the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo Bay, "thus providing the excuse for use of U.S. military might to overthrow the current government." There was even suggestion of blowing up a U.S. ship in Guantanamo Bay to create an incident similar to the Maine in 1898. The C.I.A. has a box of cigars laced with botulism delivered to Castro through a Mafia operative. Leaflets are dropped over Cuba offering rewards for assassinating Cuban leaders - \$150,000 for Fidel, \$120,000 for Che.

In *August*, U.S. President Kennedy escalates attacks against Cuba, which include strafing tourist hotels and British ships. He issues National Security memorandum No. 181 to "engineer an internal revolt that would be followed by U.S. military intervention" in Cuba. Although Kennedy ostensibly cancelled the operations in October, on November 8 commandos destroy a Cuban industrial facility, killing 400 workers.

Congress passes the Foreign Assistance Act, including an amendment barring aid to "any country that furnishes assistance to the present government of Cuba." This provision is further amended the following year to withhold foreign aid from countries that allow ships under their flag to carry goods to or from Cuba. This begins the full trade embargo against Cuba.

By *1962* only half of Cuba's 1,400 railroad passenger cars are operational.

The sugar industry is particularly affected by the failure of transport systems and mill breakdowns.

Cuba releases the remaining 1,000 prisoners from the U.S.-sponsored invasion at the Bay of Pigs in exchange for \$53 million in baby food and medical supplies.

In *early 1962*, U.S. military leaders, working with the N.S.A, propose “Operation Northwoods,” a secret plan to commit terrorist acts against Americans and blame Cuba to create a pretext for invasion and the ouster of Fidel Castro. “We could develop a Communist Cuban terror campaign in the Miami area, in other Florida cities and even in Washington,” said one document reportedly prepared by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Northwoods plan also proposed that if the 1962 launch of John Glenn into orbit were to fail, resulting in the astronaut’s death, the U.S. government would publicize fabricated evidence that Cuba used electronic interference to sabotage the flight.

1963: President Kennedy prohibits travel to Cuba and makes financial transactions with them illegal. He authorizes the C.I.A. to renew support for exiles’ attacks on selected Cuban targets and all Cuban-owned assets in the U.S.A. are frozen.

Castro uses Soviet equipment to jam anti-Cuban broadcasts from U.S. soil. The C.I.A. uses a Cuban operative to try to poison Castro at the Havana Libre Hotel. After that fails, they develop a poison pen for use against Castro by Cuban dissident and exile, Rolando Cubela.

Kennedy prohibits shipments of cargoes paid for by the U.S. government on foreign ships that have called on a Cuban port. He also encourages maritime unions to boycott ships named on a U.S. government blacklist because of their trade with Cuba. Invoking the 1917 Trading with the Enemy Act, all Cuban assets in the U.S. (about \$33 million) are frozen. Enforcement of Cuba sanctions is transferred from the Department of Commerce to the Treasury Department. Under U.S. pressure, N.A.T.O. countries agree to an arms embargo on Cuba but continue other trade. The blacklisting of cargo ships increases Cuban freight costs by \$50 million annually.

In *November*, Kennedy is assassinated. White House papers declassified in 2003 showed Kennedy was planning a secret meeting with Fidel Castro to negotiate normalization of Cuban-American relations. Castro attempted to restart the talks with Lyndon Johnson, but was rebuffed because Johnson didn’t want to appear “soft”

on Communism. Recent literature and declassified material ties anti-Castro exiles, the Mafia and the C.I.A. together as conspirators in Kennedy's assassination.

1964: Under U.S. pressure, the O.A.S. also adopts sanctions against Cuba and demands all members sever diplomatic and trade relations. Only Mexico refuses to comply.

In *December*, anti-Castro Cuban terrorists fire a bazooka at the U.N. in an attempt to assassinate Che Guevara while he delivers a speech to the General Assembly.

C.I.A. frogmen plant two bombs on a Cuban navy vessel at the Isle of Pines. The explosion kills four and injures 17.

The Commerce Department revokes the general licenses permitting the export of food and medicine to Cuba. The Department's policy is to deny license requests for commercial transactions and only approve humanitarian donations.

Following the discovery of an arms cache of Cuban origin in Venezuela, the O.A.S. calls for mandatory sanctions covering all trade with Cuba except food and medicine. Under U.S. guidance, the O.A.S. recommends severing of diplomatic relations with Cuba – but Chile, Bolivia, Uruguay and Mexico dissent.

1965: Cuba opens the fishing port of Camarioca to allow foreign boats to remove anyone wanting to leave the island. About 7,500 refugees leave for the U.S. In December, the Cuban airlift allows more people to leave - about 45,000 flee Cuba in the next year. By 1965, nine sugar mills had been cannibalized for spare parts.

1966: President Lyndon Johnson signs a law to exempt Cuban immigrants from general U.S. immigration laws and permit any Cuban who reached U.S. territory since January 1, 1959 to become eligible for permanent residency after two years. 123,000 Cubans immediately apply for permanent status. In December, U.S. Air Force pilot Everett Jackson is shot down over Cuba after dropping arms and equipment meant for counter-revolutionaries. Jackson is captured.

1967: Che Guevara is captured and executed in Bolivia by Felix Rodriguez, a Cuban born C.I.A. officer unsuccessful at killing Castro.

1968: Castro nationalizes 55,000 small Cuban businesses. There are few left.

1969: Castro announces a campaign to produce ten million tons of sugar in the next harvest. In solidarity with Cuba, American students and workers form the Venceremos Brigade to visit Cuba and assist with the zafra (sugar cane harvest.) Every year thereafter, the V.B. send a delegation of Americans. Rumor has it that a young man from LA, Tony Villar, was an early participant. He is better known today as Antonio Villaraigosa, the mayor of Los Angeles.

Newly elected President Richard Nixon directs the C.I.A. to intensify covert actions against Cuba, ending the hiatus in harassment.

1971: Cuba's economy contracts at 1.2 percent per year over the 1960-71 period. Castro visits newly elected leftist Chilean President Salvadore Allende in Santiago.

1972: The Center for Cuban Studies is established in New York to promote cultural and academic exchanges. Cuba and the U.S.A. begin formal negotiations over the problem of airline hijackings and an accord is signed in early 1973.

Of 161 sugar mills in 1969, only 115 are still operational. Swine fever ravages the Cuban pork industry, resulting in the loss of half a million animals. The C.I.A. is blamed.

1973: A total of 260,561 Cubans have now received asylum in the U.S. since 1965.

September 11. The C.I.A. backs a coup in Chile to overthrow its democratically elected president, Salvadore Allende, who had been on good terms with Castro and the U.S.S.R. Severe human rights abuses and repression follow, compromising the U.S. position vis-à-vis human and civil rights in Cuba.

1974: The violent anti-Castro terrorist group OMEGA 7 is founded.

U.S. Senators Claiborne Pell and Jacob Javits visit Cuba, the first American elected officials to visit the island since diplomatic relations were severed. In November, American officials conduct secret normalization talks with Cuban officials, but deadlock over Cuban involvement in Angola.

George Herbert Walker Bush becomes C.I.A. chief. He asks Orlando Bosch to unite all the Cuban exiles- the "Miami mafia," into one organization. C.O.R.U. is formed

and would be responsible for more than 100 terrorist acts in 25 countries, including the 1976 bombing of a Cuban airliner with Cuba's Olympic fencing team aboard.

1975: The O.A.S. votes to end political and economic sanctions against Cuba.

The South African army invades Angola. The Marxist Angolan government requests Cuban military support and Castro agrees to send troops and equipment. Washington defends South Africa's move as self-defense against Communism.

The U.S. announces that it will allow foreign subsidiaries of U.S. companies to sell products to Cuba and that it will no longer penalize other nations for trading with Cuba. However, U.S. President Gerald Ford warns that Cuban involvement in Angola prevents the restoration of diplomatic relations. U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger reiterates that there is no possibility of relations while Cuba has troops in Africa. The U.S. threatens military action if Cuba sends troops elsewhere.

1976: Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau visits Cuba, the first of many visits both officially and unofficially. Castro would visit Canada to attend Trudeau's funeral in 2000. Trudeau was the first N.A.T.O. leader to visit Cuba after Castro took power and led the way in challenging U.S. trade sanctions against Cuba.

Luis Posada Carrilles and his men bomb a Cuban airliner, killing all 73 aboard.

1977: U.S. President Jimmy Carter lifts the travel ban. Interest Sections are opened in Havana and Washington and discussions between the two countries are initiated on a broad range of issues. Congress also repeals the provision of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 banning aid to countries that trade with Cuba. The National Security Council rescinds the ship blacklist.

1978: Castro demands the closure of Guantanamo Bay. Anti-Castro terrorists bomb the Cuban mission to the U.N., the Cuban Interests Section and the Soviet U.N. Mission. The Cuban Mission to the U.N. is bombed a month later. No arrests are made. 20,000 Cuban troops are deployed to Angola to shore up its Marxist regime.

1979: Cuba changes policy and allows exiles to return for family visits. The U.S. puts Cuba on the list of nations that support terrorism. Castro visits Harlem.

1980: Castro announces that anyone who wishes to leave may do so from the port of Mariel. 125,000 Cubans flee to the U.S. over several months. In September, anti-Castro terrorists assassinate the Cuban attaché to the U.N.

Junta Patriótica Cubana (Cuban Patriotic Coalition) replaces C.O.R.U. as the self-proclaimed central organizational structure of the anti-Castro community.

Anti-Cuban terrorist group Omega 7 bombs the Cuban consulate in Montreal, Canada.

1981: President Ronald Reagan tightens the embargo “in response to Cuban promotion of leftist revolution in Central America, especially El Salvador.” He supports Radio Marti. Reagan accuses Cuba of fomenting Communist control in Nicaragua and Communist insurgency in El Salvador.

Jorge Mas Canosa founds the Cuban-American National Foundation (C.A.N.F.).

Between *1979* and *1981*, four plagues ravage Cuba: hemorrhagic conjunctivitis, dengue, sugarcane smut and blue-mold blight. There are 158 casualties.

1982: President Ronald Reagan restores the travel ban against Cuba. The F.B.I. investigates Omega 7. Eduardo Arocena, its leader, is arrested and admits to bombings and murders

1983: Shortly after a coup by a pro-Castro Marxist leader, 8,000 U.S. troops storm Grenada. U.S. Marines kill 54 Cubans and capture 642.

In *Reagan v. Wald*, the First U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals unanimously rules that U.S. restrictions on travel to Cuba are invalid. The U.S. wins on appeal. The Supreme Court votes 5 to 4 to uphold Treasury Department restrictions on travel to Cuba on the grounds that they are part of the embargo rather than “political control of the right to travel.”

1984: U.S. Presidential candidate Jesse Jackson visits Cuba.

Eduardo Arosena admits to biological warfare operations against Cuba.

In May, President Reagan appoints Jorge Mas Canosa as chair of the President’s Advisory Board for Broadcasting to Cuba.

1985: Anti-Castro Cuban exiles get the support of U.S. President Ronald Reagan to broadcast hard-line anti-Castro news and information from the U.S. to Cuba on Radio Marti, funded by American tax dollars. In protest, Cuba cancels the existing immigration agreement with the U.S. Bowing to continued pressure from right-wing lobbyists, Reagan bans travel to the U.S. by Cuban government or Communist party officials or their representatives, including academics and artists.

A report prepared by the Cuban National Bank for Paris Club creditors reveals that Cuba has bought sugar on the world market and resold it to the Soviets at a profit, used the profits to purchase Soviet oil, then sold the oil at a profit.

Cuba's total debt to the U.S.S.R. is estimated at \$22 billion.

1987: The U.S. proposes a motion at the U.N. criticizing Cuba for human rights violations. The U.N. Human Rights Commission votes it down. Cuban General Rafael del Pino defects to the U.S. and speaks out on Radio Martí.

According to the Treasury Department, trade between U.S. foreign subsidiaries and Cuba averaged \$260 million a year from 1982 to 1987.

In December, after the Cuban Army's victory at Cuito Canavale, Angola and South Africa reach an agreement that Cuban troops will leave Angola and South Africa will withdraw from Namibia and implement the U.N. plan for Namibian independence. Castro and Mandela become lifelong friends.

A *1988* study estimates that the U.S. embargo has cost U.S. firms \$30 billion in lost exports over the past 25 years.

Cuba begins to descend into a severe economic crisis. Castro offers to cooperate in drug enforcement and other matters of mutual interest. Presidential candidate George H. W. Bush, campaigning for a Cuban-American congressional candidate in Miami, says he would like to normalize relations with Cuba but not until it "reforms its political system and ends human rights abuses."

Nobel Prize-winning writer Gabriel Garcia Marquez advises Castro to retire his fatigues and put on a business suit.

1990: T.V. Marti is launched, its signal jammed by Cuba. In Miami, the

Cuban Museum of Arts and Culture is bombed for exhibiting work by artists living in Cuba.

President G.H.W. Bush pardons Orlando Bosch. He had served time for a 1968 bazooka attack on a Polish ship in Miami and for sending death threats to French, Italian and Spanish heads of state.

Two armed anti-Cuban terrorists from Miami infiltrate Cuba via Santa Cruz del Norte with orders to commit acts of violence. They are caught with weapons and forged documents issued in Miami. They were also carrying flyers inviting people to join a “Cuban Liberation Army.”

The U.S. Congress passes the Mack Amendment to prohibit all trade with Cuba by subsidiaries of U.S. companies and the cessation of aid to any country that trades with Cuba. Canada and the United Kingdom express their strong opposition to the extraterritorial nature of the legislation.

1991: Mikhail Gorbachev announces the withdrawal of all Soviet troops from Cuba.

José Basulto founds Brothers to the Rescue. President Bush authorizes three United States Air Force 0-2 aircraft, the military version of the Cessna 172, for the group.

Cuba completes the withdrawal of troops from Angola. Cuban officials estimate that U.S. sanctions have cost \$15 billion from 1961 to 1991.

1992: Democratic presidential candidate Bill Clinton endorses the “Cuban Democracy Act” while on a Florida campaign stop.

President George Bush signs the Torricelli Bill into law. Congressman Robert Torricelli boasts the bill will bring down Castro “within weeks.” The bill forbids foreign subsidiaries of U.S. companies from dealing with Cuba, prohibits any ship that has docked in Cuban harbors from entering U.S. ports for 180 days, and calls for a termination of aid to any country that provides assistance to Cuba. The U.K. and Canada bar U.S. subsidiaries located in their countries from complying with C.D.A. provisions.

U.S.-based anti-Cuban terrorist group “Comandos L” fires shots at the Hotel Melia on Varadero Beach and carries out at least eight terrorist raids against Cuba .

The U.S. Coast Guard enters Cuban waters to rescue Comandos L crew on a boat that capsized during an operation. They were never charged with a crime.

Russia signs a series of trade agreements with Cuba, including a new oil-for-sugar barter agreement. Russia offers to trade 2.3 million tons of oil in exchange for 1.5 million tons of sugar in 1993 (down from 13 million tons of oil in 1990 for 10 million tons of sugar in 1991). The U.N. General Assembly votes 59 to 3, with 79 abstentions, to lift economic sanctions against Cuba. Only Romania and Israel join the U.S. in opposing the measure. Opposition to the embargo increases each year, with only Israel consistently voting with the U.S. By 1992 the value of total trade turnover (exports plus imports) between Cuba and the former Soviet bloc countries had fallen to \$830 million; about 8% of its 1989 level.

Cuba ends its military backing for revolutionary movements in other countries. The new 1992 Constitution and new laws provide limited property rights to foster international investment. References to atheism and the Soviet Union are purged from the constitution.

1993: In Miami, Tony Bryant, leader of Comandos L, gives a press conference announcing plans to carry out more attacks against Cuba, especially its hotels. The U.S. government takes no action against him.

In *April*, the Cypriot tanker *Mikonos* is fired upon in Cuban waters. Brothers to the Rescue publicly encourage attempts on the life of Fidel Castro and violence against Cuba. Andrés Nazario Sargén, head of Alpha 66, announces that his organization had recently completed five operations in Cuba. Alpha 66 spokesman Humberto Pérez announces that its war on Castro would be extended to tourists visiting the island.

Cuba ends the ban on the use of the U.S. Dollar and it quickly becomes the preferred currency.

Castro gives French spirits corporation Pernod Ricard a monopoly on the island's rum manufacturing, which will bring in more than \$20 million in profit annually until 2004.

1994: Aircraft owned by Brothers to the Rescue fly over Havana at low altitude and drop smoke bombs. The Guitart Cayo Coco Hotel is fired on.

In October, a group of armed men land on the causeway to Cayo Santa Maria near Caibarién, Villa Clara, and kill a Cuban national.

Terrorist Luis Posada Carriles and five accomplices smuggle weapons to Cartagena, Colombia, during the Ibero-American Summit in a plot to assassinate Castro. Cuban intelligence foils the plot. Posada Carriles admits his involvement to the New York Times.

Four armed terrorists are arrested in Varadero.

In *November*, a report issued by Americas Watch and the Fund for Free Expression (Dangerous Dialogue: Attacks on Freedom of Expression in Miami's Cuban Exile Community) details attacks on academic freedoms and other serious restrictions on freedoms of expression in the Cuban-American community.

Unbearable living conditions lead to protests in Havana. 27,000 Cubans flee; many are picked up by the Coast Guard and detained at Guantanamo.

Cuba and the U.S. sign an immigration accord. The wet foot/dry foot policy is implemented. The U.S. agrees to grant at least 20,000 immigrant visas at its diplomatic offices in Havana each year, up from an average of 11,000 issued annually over the previous decade.

1995: In Cuba, two U.S. residents and anti-Castro terrorists are caught with 51 pounds of C-4 explosives and other equipment. The Guitart Cayo Coco Hotel is shot at again.

The Cuban National Assembly passes a foreign investment law that permits foreign companies and individuals, including Cuban exiles, to own 100 percent of the equity in Cuban investments, replacing joint-venture requirements involving the Cuban government. All sectors except health, education, and defense are open under the new regulations.

President Clinton eases restrictions on travel to Cuba for educational, religious, and human rights purposes. The move is strongly criticized by anti-Castro members of Congress, who pledge to redouble their efforts to tighten sanctions on Cuba.

Andre Ouellet, Canadian Foreign Minister, tells the media "We cannot accept

that our Canadian firms, who are legitimately doing business in other countries, be restricted by foreign legislations.”

President Bill Clinton signs the Helms-Burton Act, allowing lawsuits against foreign companies that invest in hitherto U.S. owned properties seized by the Cuban government. The Helms Burton Act denies the president discretion over the embargo. It also denies U.S. entry of executives and major shareholders, as well as their immediate families, of firms found to be “trafficking” in expropriated property. The legislation also restricts U.S. aid to independent states of the former Soviet Union in the event they provide assistance to intelligence facilities in Cuba or for completion of the Juragua nuclear facility. It reaffirms the embargo under the Trading with the Enemy Act.

The Cuban Air Force shoots down two Brothers To the Rescue planes over international waters after their violation of Cuban airspace. President Clinton condemns the shoot down and suspends charter travel from the U.S. There are twenty-five violations of Cuban airspace in twenty months by anti-Castro groups.

Canadian Trade Minister Art Eggleton announces that Canada will seek consultations with the U.S. under the North American Free Trade Agreement (N.A.F.T.A.) regarding the legality of the Helms-Burton Act. Mexico soon joins in the request. Canadian officials also say they will try to include provisions in the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (M.A.I.) that would prevent the U.S. from imposing secondary sanctions on its trading partners.

The European Union suspends discussions with Havana on an economic cooperation agreement because of Cuba’s failure to enact political reforms and economic liberalization. The U.S. denies visas to some shareholders and senior executives of the Canadian mining company Sherritt International under the Helms-Burton law. President Clinton invokes the national interest waiver and imposes a moratorium of at least six months on the filing of suits.

The State Department threatens to ban executives of the Mexican telecommunications company Grupo Domos from entering the U.S. under the Helms-Burton Act. The other 34 members of the O.A.S. pass a resolution declaring that the Helms-Burton Act “does not conform to international law.” The Mexican Congress overwhelmingly approves a Helms-Burton “antidote” law that imposes fines of up to \$301,000 on Mexican companies that comply with the U. S. legislation.

Hurricane Lili inflicts considerable damage on the sugar harvest in Cuba. Estimated losses for the affected provinces are 20 percent, or a minimum of 70,000 tons. Washington announces that aircraft carrying emergency relief supplies to Cuba will be allowed to fly directly from U.S. territory. The European Commission approves a \$10.5 million humanitarian aid package for Cuba.

The European Union (E.U.) Council of Ministers approves anti-boycott legislation that forbids compliance with the Helms-Burton Act unless an E.U. firm receives a waiver on grounds that refusing to comply will seriously injure either a company's or the E.U.'s interests. U.S. court awards under Helms-Burton will not be recognized and can be recovered in the E.U. if a successful American claimant has property there.

The World Trade Organization (W.T.O.) agrees to establish a dispute settlement panel to review the E.U.'s complaint about the Helms-Burton law. The Canadian Parliament passes anti-Helms-Burton legislation penalizing companies for obeying the U.S. law, allowing the attorney general to block U.S. court judgments and allowing Canadians to recoup penalties. President Clinton responds by waiving Title III of the Helms-Burton Act for another six months.

The Dutch bank ING, whose subsidiaries have substantial interests in the U.S., pulls out of Cuba and does not renew \$30 million in loans to Cubazucar, the state-owned trading company.

The U.S. Congress passes a bill to compensate anti-Castro exiles and their families by selling previously frozen Cuban assets.

1997: Cuban exiles bomb seven hotels and the Bodeguita del Medio restaurant in Havana. Fabio Di Celmo, a young Italian tourist, is killed. Raúl Cruz León, a citizen of El Salvador, admits being paid U.S. \$4,500 for each bomb.

The Cuban American National Foundation (C.A.N.F.) offers unconditional support of bombings in Cuba. The president of C.A.N.F. states, "We do not consider these to be terrorist acts" and added that any action against Cuba was "legitimate."

Walter Van der Veer, an American, is caught in possession of incendiary devices in Cuba.

Cuba passes a law that permits Cuban citizens to sue the U.S. for damages from the thirty-four-year embargo.

The U.S. administration releases a report describing the economic aid that would be available to Cuba once Castro is out of power and the island moves toward a multiparty democracy. Castro angrily accuses the U.S. of “trying to purchase the day of would-be surrender.”

World Trade Organization's Director General Renato Ruggiero names a three-member panel to rule on the Helms-Burton dispute. Within hours, the Clinton administration announces that the U.S. will not “show up” for such proceedings, arguing that Helms-Burton is based on foreign policy rather than commercial concerns and therefore should not be judged in the W.T.O.

Cuba's government establishes a new central bank as part of its modernization program in the finance and banking sectors, but denies that the bank reflects a move toward a market economy. Noting that Cuba has failed to improve its human rights record, the European Union extends by six months its freeze on cooperation with Cuba.

Citing financial problems, the Mexican company Grupo Domos relinquishes its investment in Cuba's telecommunications system. The Italian company Stet replaces Grupo Domos in the Cuban telephone joint venture after reaching a financial settlement with I.T.T.

Senator Jesse Helms notes that “the price of doing business in Castro's tropical gulag has just gone up.”

Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), chairman of the House Subcommittee on International Economic Policy and Trade, introduces legislation that would deny foreign aid (other than humanitarian assistance) and trade preferences to countries that sign free trade agreements with Cuba. Caribbean Community and Common Market (Caricom) countries protest and warn they will not allow the proposed U.S. legislation to affect their relationship with Cuba.

The U.S. government agrees to ease temporarily its travel ban and embargo against Cuba during the visit of Pope John Paul II to Cuba in January 1998. Catholics will be allowed to travel to Cuba from the U.S. and Catholic churches and charities will be able ship supplies and equipment to help organize the visit. The State Department

declares the B.M. Group of Israel has violated Helms-Burton Act and bars the firm's officials from U.S. territory.

T.V. Martí's broadcasts are switched from VHF to UHF in an effort to strengthen the station's signal in Cuba.

1998: The Government of Cuba gives the F.B.I. and other agencies of the United States information on terrorist activities and groups working in the United States against Cuba.

In an interview with the New York Times, Luis Posada Carriles admits that he organized the bombing campaign against tourist sites in Cuba, that the leaders of the Cuban American National Foundation had financed his operations and that Jorge Mas Canosa, the Foundation's president, had personally overseen the flow of money and logistical support.

His intelligence advisors tell U.S. President Bill Clinton that Cuba no longer poses a threat to U.S. national security.

In *January*, The Pope visits Cuba and attributes Cuba's "material and moral poverty" to "limitations to fundamental freedoms" and "discouragement of the individual," as well as to "restrictive economic measures-unjust and ethically unacceptable-imposed from outside the country." Eleven Cuban political prisoners, whose release the Pope requested, are freed and sent to Canada. The Pope strongly condemns the embargo as "monstrously immoral."

Canadian company Sherritt International, sanctioned under the Helms-Burton law, announces it will build a \$150 million natural gas generating plant and invest \$38 million in a cell phone company in Cuba.

The Clinton administration eases controls on humanitarian shipment of food and medicine and reinstates the provision allowing Cuban-Americans to send up to \$1,200 a year to relatives in Cuba. Cuban Foreign Minister Roberto Robaina says that Havana will refuse all direct humanitarian aid from the U.S. as long as the U.S. government maintains the embargo.

Forbes lists Fidel Castro as 11th on a recent list of the world's richest "Kings, Queens and Dictators" with an estimated personal fortune of \$100 million. Indignant, Castro denies self-aggrandizement.

The Clinton administration announces that it is up to the members of Caricom to decide whether Cuba should become a member of their organization, signaling a softening of U.S. policy toward Cuba.

For the first time in seven years, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights fails to pass a resolution condemning the Castro regime for its human rights violations. The move is a major setback for U.S. foreign policy.

Cuba and the Dominican Republic normalize diplomatic relations, which had been broken off in 1959. This move follows Cuba's restoration of diplomatic relations with Guatemala in 1996, and Haiti and Spain in 1998.

A report of the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency concludes that Cuba does not pose "a significant military threat to the U.S. and to other countries in the region."

In *April*, the E.U. lets its W.T.O. challenge to Helms-Burton lapse. The Clinton administration and E.U. officials reach an agreement that provides for penalties to be imposed on companies that invest in expropriated property, including denial of government export credits and other assistance. In exchange for E.U. action on expropriated property, U.S. officials agree to seek changes to the Helms-Burton law. In addition, an international registry is established for claims on expropriated property to serve as the basis for government action against subsequent investors. Opponents in Congress maintain that the U.S.-E.U. agreement is not effective enough in preventing investment in expropriated property in Cuba.

World Food Program Executive Director Catherine Bertini calls for \$20.5 million in drought assistance to Cuba. The U.S. says it will contribute only if the aid is not disbursed through the Cuban government. Castro rejects the offer.

The U.N. General Assembly, for the sixth year in a row, passes a resolution calling for an end to the U.S. embargo against Cuba. The vote is 157 to 2 (U.S. and Israel, 12 abstentions).

A number of senators and a group of former foreign relations officials, including former Secretaries of State Henry Kissinger and Lawrence Eagleburger, urge President Clinton to authorize a bipartisan commission to review U.S. Cuba policy.

1999: President Clinton rejects the plan for a bipartisan commission to review

Cuba policy, but allows the resumption of direct postal service and increased air service. He authorizes any U.S. citizen, not just family members, to send \$1,200 a year to Cuba and permits, on a case-by-case basis, sales of food and agricultural inputs to private and nongovernmental organizations in Cuba.

The Cuban government launches a crackdown on political opponents. The National Assembly passes a law restricting access to, possession of, and dissemination of “subversive” information produced by the U.S. or seeking to assist the U.S. in “subverting the revolution and reinforcing the embargo.” The O.A.S. strongly criticizes this legislation.

For the first time since 1953, Major League Baseball comes to Cuba. The Baltimore Orioles play an all-star Cuban team in Havana in a game authorized by the Clinton administration as part of its effort to improve relations with the Cuban people - but only after assurances that the Cuban government will not receive any revenues from the game.

In *May*, eight organizations representing the Cuban people file a lawsuit against the United States, seeking a total of \$181.1 billion in damages for the loss of life and human injury as a result of U.S. acts of aggression against Cuba over the past forty years. The lawsuit, filed in Havana, identified war crimes such as the Bay of Pigs invasion, the use of biological warfare, bombings and air attacks, military provocations from the U.S. Naval Base at Guantánamo and U.S. support for terrorist actions.

In *May*, U.S. drug czar General Barry McCaffrey, former Commander-in Chief of the U.S. Southern Command, declares that Cuba is not an accomplice of drug traffickers.

2000: President Bill Clinton eases sanctions and allows shipments of food and agricultural products to Cuba for the first time forty years. Castro makes a return visit to Harlem and is welcomed by thousands.

For the ninth year, the U.N. General Assembly votes to condemn the embargo by a vote of 167 to three with four abstentions.

Panamanian authorities arrest Posada Carriles and former member of Omega 7 before the tenth Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government. Weapons, explosives and sketches of the Cuban President’s route and scheduled public appearances

are seized. The Cuban American National Foundation finances the team of lawyers hired to defend the terrorists.

Cuban security announces it has investigated, documented and neutralized 638 plans to assassinate Fidel Castro.

Congress votes to release \$90 million of frozen Cuban assets to pay a \$187.6 million judgment against the Cuban government in favor of the families of the pilots killed in the downing of the Brothers to the Rescue planes in 1995.

In *January*, Havana hosts the U.S. Healthcare Exhibition, the first American trade show in forty years. Among the 100 companies are ADM, Pfizer and Eli Lilly.

2001: In April, World Bank President James Wolfensohn praises Fidel Castro for doing “a great job” in providing for the social welfare of the Cuban people.

A U.S. court orders the Cuban government to pay \$7 million in damages to a Miami woman for unknowingly marrying a Cuban intelligence agent.

2002: The Cuba Working Group is created and releases a nine-point plan calling for specific changes in U.S.-Cuba policy. In addition to lifting the travel ban and allowing unrestricted sales of food and medicine, the plan recommends increased security cooperation with Cuba including efforts to thwart international crime, drug smuggling, terrorism and environmental disasters.

In *May*, John Bolton, U.S. Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, states, “The United States believes that Cuba has at least a limited offensive biological warfare research and development effort.” Gen. Gary Speer, the acting commander-in-chief of Southern Command, tells reporters he has seen no evidence that Cuba has biological weapons. On National Public Radio, Gen. Charles Wilhelm, U.S.M.C. (ret.), the former commander in chief of U.S. Southern Command, whose purview included Cuba, states “During my three year tenure, from September 1997 until September 2000 at Southern Command, I didn’t receive a single report or a single piece of evidence that would have lead me to the conclusion that Cuba was in fact developing, producing or weaponizing biological or chemical agents.”

Two planes are hijacked from Cuba to Key West. The aircraft are auctioned to pay judgments against Cuba. The 1973 hijacking accord is breached.

James Cason, top U.S. diplomat in Havana, meets publicly and often with dissidents.

Dissident Oswaldo Payá, author of the Varela Project, wins the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought. The Project collected 10,000 signatures required to call a national referendum on the economic and social reforms needed to turn Cuba into a democracy. Paya presented the signatures to the National Assembly in May 2002. The National Assembly refused to act on it.

2003: In February, the World Trade Organization rules in Cuba's favor viz. the Havana Club trademark dispute between the United States and the European Union.

The U.N. General Assembly votes 179 to 2 (with two abstentions) to condemn the U.S. embargo against Cuba.

The embargo notwithstanding, the U.S. exports \$300 million in food to Cuba, becoming the island's top food trading partner.

In a speech to the media, President Bush announces a crackdown on travel to Cuba, including travel from third countries: "I've instructed the Department of Homeland Security to increase inspections of travelers and shipments to and from Cuba... We will also target those who travel to Cuba illegally through third countries, and those who sail to Cuba on private vessels in violation of the embargo." Bush also announced the U.S. would incite and encourage illegal immigration from Cuba, "We will better inform Cubans of the many routes to safe and legal entry into the United States through a public outreach campaign in southern Florida and inside Cuba itself. We will increase the number of new Cuban immigrants we welcome every year."

Bush escalates broadcasts to Cuba: "Radio and T.V. Marti are bringing the message of freedom to the Cuban people. This administration fully recognizes the need to enhance the effectiveness of Radio and T.V. Marti. Earlier this year, we launched a new satellite service to expand our reach to Cuba. On May 20th, we staged the historic flight of Commando Solo; an airborne transmission system that broke through Castro's jamming efforts."

2004: The United Nations General Assembly again condemns the U.S. embargo of Cuba by a vote of 157-2.

Forbes magazine again includes Fidel Castro on its list of millionaires, estimating his personal fortune at \$150 million.

In *February*, at a meeting with Cuban exiles, U.S. Treasury Secretary John Snow announces that third country companies that promote travel and trade with Cuba are in violation of the embargo. The Treasury Department freezes the assets of several companies including Canadian Hola Sun Travel.

In *late 2004*, Castro bans the U.S. dollar, citing Bush Administration harassment of businesses worldwide. The U.S. had fined U.B.S. for conducting Cuba transactions. For the 13th consecutive year the U.N. condemns the embargo, 179 to 4 (voting against were the U.S.A., Israel, Palau and the Marshall Islands). Even Afghanistan votes against the embargo. The embargo is estimated to have caused \$79 billion in losses to Cuba and caused more than 3,500 deaths.

MOJITO

During the 17th and 18th centuries, the Spanish Main in general and Cuba in particular attracted privateers (sanctioned by rival governments) and pirates (unsanctioned) for two reasons. First, Spanish galleons laden with gold from Mexico and Peru would rendezvous in Cuba before heading to Spain. British, Dutch and French privateers had enormous incentive to capture Spanish treasure. By employing privateers, European powers could harass Spanish hegemony in the New World without committing an act of war. Privateers were allowed to keep a portion of the booty they captured. The spoils and glory of war paid off for privateers such as Sir Francis Drake. Drake's fleet of seven large ships and twenty-two smaller vessels set sail from Plymouth, England, on September 14th, 1585 and reached Santiago in the Cape Verde Islands on November 17, which was sacked. On New Year's Day, 1586, they captured Santo Domingo and extorted a 25,000 ducat ransom. On February 9th, Cartagena (in present day Colombia) was captured and occupied until March 26th. Here again the town was plundered and a ransom of 110,000 ducats was collected. Next, they sailed north across the Caribbean to the coast of Florida. St. Augustine was captured and destroyed on May 28. The waters around Cuba were rarely dull.

Spanish Mercantilism restricted commerce to royal monopolies, giving the inhabitants of Cuba economic incentive to break Spanish law and trade with pirates. A Cuban black market emerged long before chronic shortages of consumer goods associated with Soviet inspired 20th century state planning.

Spanish galleons, gorged with treasure that blocked gun ports, were sitting ducks for Dutchman Piet Heyn, who simply commandeered Spanish treasure ships without firing a shot. On one such expedition, Heyn made off, or should I say Madoff (!)

with over thirty-four tons of silver. He went back to the Netherlands with fifteen captured Spanish ships and his original fleet intact. Ships he couldn't take he torched in Havana Harbor. Alejandro Selkirk, abandoned by his crew on Juan Fernandez Island, became the inspiration for the 1717 novel Robinson Crusoe.

Instability in Cuba was exacerbated by the War of the Spanish Succession. The decades long struggle, known as Queen Anne's War in the British American colonies, was waged primarily by England to preserve the balance of power that the unification of the Kingdoms of Spain and France under a single Bourbon monarch would upset. Combined French and Spanish amphibious forces used Cuba as a base to launch assaults on Charles Towne in present day South Carolina. England retaliated with letters of marque for buccaneers like Sir Henry Morgan to wage war on Spain in Cuba. The memory of Sir Henry lives on in his eponymous Spiced Rum.

After the 1776 American Revolution and incipient industrialization of North America in the 19th century, the United States became Cuba's major export market and American banks provided increasing amounts of capital and credit. The colonial dependency on Spain, long in decline, made less economic sense. Bolivar and San Martin were the new heroes of the era and Cuba wanted independence too. But Spain was determined to hold on to the bitter end as Cuba increasingly demanded self-determination and the abolition of slavery. In Cuba, the two issues were intertwined and supporters of independence from Spain were usually abolitionists as well and vice versa. Civil unrest was the norm from October 10, 1868, when Carlos Manuel de Cespedes freed all his slaves and called on all Cubans to unite against Spanish colonialism, until January 1, 1899, when Spain surrendered Cuba to the United States. Nominal independence was granted on May 20, 1902, but the Platt Amendment limited its meaningfulness.

Thirty years' of independence struggles capped by U.S. armed intervention to oust Spain depressed sugar exports and left Cuban property owners deep in debt, mostly to American creditors. Corporations and entrepreneurs, including R.B. Hawley, founder of the Cuban-American Sugar Company, Milton Hershey, and James H. Post, who became the president of the National Sugar Refining Company of Jersey, dominated the sugar industry and the Cuban government. Numerous labor concessions were granted and the government was obliged to build infrastructure to benefit foreign interests, even while basic services were lacking for the population. Under American management, the Cuban sugar industry became more efficient than ever. Over time and under increasingly right wing and repressive rulers, resentment built up against the Cuban government and its American backer.

After W.W. I Cuba gained a new competitive advantage. In 1920 the Noble Experiment, better known as Prohibition, became law across the U.S. For Cuba it was the beginning of a thriving international bar culture and eventually, Mob culture. On the day Prohibition went into effect, numerous companies outfitted ferries for the over-night booze cruise from Florida to the island. By the time the Noble Experiment was repealed as a failure in 1933, the Mob and its vice industries were firmly entrenched in Cuba and a man they could do business with, General Fulgencio Batista, was in charge of the island.

But taking Cuba over was not a cakewalk; American gangsters had to earn their place at the gaming tables and brothels fair and square. Wiseguy 'Lucky' Luciano, tried and failed to take control of Havana booze and narcotics but was run out of Cuba. 'Bugsy' Seigel, of Hotel Flamingo fame, was more successful but got whacked in 1947. But Meyer Lansky held the Ace of Spades; Batista already knew Lansky from his bootlegging days running liquor to speakeasies up north in the 1920s. The pair got along well. With Lansky's help, Batista returned from retirement in Florida, ran for the presidency and on the eve of his projected loss, staged a military coup in 1952. Instead of running from the law, gangsters now had the power of government on their side. Batista asked Lansky to be his Advisor on Gambling Reform.



Fulgencio Batista



*Meyer Suchowljansky,
a Jew from Grodno, Poland,
better known as
Meyer Lansky from the
underworld*

Cuba's real status as an underworld haven was well portrayed in American cinema of the time. In John Huston's *Key Largo*, produced in 1948 and starring screen legends Lionel Barrymore, Humphrey Bogart, Lauren Bacall and Edward G. Robinson, a small time counterfeiter and mafia capo (Robinson), ordered to leave the U.S. as an undesirable alien, plans on escaping to Cuba from the Everglades to make a fresh start and plan his return. Bogart plays a fearless and heroic W.W. II vet who, unarmed and against terrible odds, single handedly saves his fallen war buddy's girl (Bacall) and stops Rocco (Robinson) and his minions before they reach their Cuban paradise.

Musical entertainment thrived. The nocturnal vice industries in Cuba needed live entertainment, boosting the careers of incomparable artists like Beny More, Celia Cruz and Damaso Perez Prado, the original mambo king. They also helped create the backdrop for an indelible part of Americana with *I Love Lucy*. Ricky Ricardo (Desi Arnaz) played the exotic, drum-banging husband of mastermind as dimwit Lucille Ball. *I Love Lucy* (1951-1957) became a smash success on the new medium of television and a nostalgic 1950's American icon loved by millions. Reruns are still very popular.

Rum distilled from sugarcane, cigars from *Vuelta Abajo*, mulatas in skimpy clothes, baseball and rhumba into the wee hours. A '55 Chevy behind a '49 Buick at a stoplight. That was Cuba then and it is Cuba now. The Cuban rap group *Orishas* and salsa group *Charanga Habanera* tell the contemporary story in their music.

You probably haven't read a chapter about pirates that digresses into how to make a chic cocktail but in a book about Cuba there is a connection.

The Mojito originated in Havana in the late 1800s and gained popularity with Americans during Prohibition. Legend has it that a precursor to the Mojito may have existed as early as the late 16th century. Richard Drake, an English pirate, made a concoction similar to the Mojito by mixing *aguardiente* (crude rum), sugar, mint leaf and lime. He coined the drink *El Draque* after his commander, Sir Francis Drake. *El Draque* is still popular in Mexico, Columbia and Venezuela, Drake's old stomping grounds. It became popular with the Cuban working-class in the early 19th century. Cuban fiction writer Ramón de Palma referred to the *Draquecito* (little Drake) in an 1838 book involving a character that drank one of the cocktails daily to keep the doctor away.

Some historians believe that slaves working in Cuban sugar cane fields in the late 19th century created the Mojito. The word *guarapo* (sugar cane juice), of which the Mojito is made, is of mixed African and Spanish provenance. Slaves laboring in sugar cane fields longed for a familiar sweet drink from their homeland, made from yucca.

As a substitute, they used sugar cane stalks. The Spanish referred to the resulting juice as jarabe, meaning “nectar.” The Africans, not knowing Spanish, understood this word as “garapa.” Thinking that the slaves were saying “guarapo,” this word became a part of the vocabulary.

Apart from drinking guarapo, slaves often drank aguardiente as an escape. To this day, strong rum is prominent in everyday Cuban culture, but alcoholism is uncommon.

Angel Martinez opened La Bodeguita del Medio in 1942 as a general store and later converted it into a restaurant and bar in 1946, where the Mojito gained popularity in Havana. Frequenting the bar were students, musicians, and soon-to-be celebrities, including Ernest Hemingway, Bridget Bardot and Nat King Cole. The bar is now a popular tourist stop in Havana.

Another well-known drink, the *Cuba Libre*, was allegedly so named in the 1890s when a group of off duty American soldiers gathered in a bar in old Havana drinking rum and the new soft drink, Coca-cola. The captain raised his glass and sung out the battle cry that had inspired Cuba’s soldiers in the war with Spain: “Cuba Libre.”

In 1955, Lansky took over as operator of a newly established casino at the Hotel Nacional, which was managed by International Hotels, Inc., a subsidiary of Pan Am, and the following year he started building his own hotel-casino, the Hotel Riviera. The Riviera Hotel opened in December 1957 with a floorshow headed by Ginger Rogers that was carried in part on American network television. The hotel-casino turned out to be an immense success. Of course, he did not know that he would have to abandon it three years later.

In October 1960 the Riviera Hotel and 165 other American enterprises were confiscated and nationalized. The popular, wide-eyed 1950’s love affair with Cuba as a playground was over. In the days following Batista’s flight into exile, enraged mobs sacked and looted the casinos, which they considered symbols of decadence amidst gnawing poverty. Slot machines and roulette tables burned in the streets.

The new Cuban government was ideologically opposed to gambling, vice and the pursuit of profit of any kind, legitimate or not. A new, intellectually, physically and spiritually (but atheist) superior Cuban was to be molded and Castro took a very dim view of tourism, which he felt polluted his project. Tourism collapsed and by 1975 reached 12,000 visitors annually, most of them from the Soviet bloc. Of course, the hermetic wall around Cuba could not have been maintained by refusing passenger planes of tourists entry and jamming radio and television broadcasts alone, as was done by East Germany. The U.S. embargo and quarantine unwittingly helped subdue non-

conformist influence considerably by inviting it abroad and giving it a foreign character.

Today the Riviera Hotel, like all hotels in Cuba, is the cornerstone of Cuba's feeble economy. I have visited the Riviera numerous times and it never fails to impress. The Cuban government has been careful to preserve the original terrazzo floors, banquet halls, interior décor and even gold plated china and silverware commissioned by Lansky and incredibly, still used in the private dining room where he held court. I have many fond memories of sizzling music and dancing at the Copa Room, dubbed the 'Palacio de la Salsa' in the 1990s as Cuba legalized the U.S. dollar and attempted to bring back the hedonistic Cuba of old, warts and all, in a desperate bid to bring tourism back and stave off total collapse and starvation after the Soviet Union expired.

If ever there were the time when the U.S. Embargo would have forced Castro out of power, it was the summer of 1994. Cuba was at its most chaotic. Cubans were runway model thin. Unable to pay for Mexican gasoline, cars and buses were idled and Cubans relied on 25 kilo "Flying Pigeon" Chinese bicycles for transport. Unable to pay for chlorine to purify the water supply, water borne pathogens thrived. Without crude, Cuban power plants shut down and Cubans were eaten alive in fetid, un-air conditioned apartments as mosquitoes had a field day in the still, midnight air unperturbed by electric fans. Tens of thousands of Cubans tossed themselves in to the sea on inner tubes to drown or be rescued by the U.S. Coast Guard. That was the breaking point. Had the U.S. embargo been lifted after all this misery failed to dislodge the government, Cuba today would at the very least have a mixed economy and the Castros' rule would not be as absolute. Détente with the U.S. and a mixed economy are incompatible with Fidel Castro's agenda and the ideology and the Cuban Communist Party as we know it. Without a socialist trade and barter bloc to rely on a la COMECON and with the introduction of a dollar economy and all the inequality that brings, internal Cuban government dictate over the economy became absolutely critical to maintaining political control. By surviving the crisis of '94, the Cuban government, i.e. Fidel, grew in strength and prestige. Cubans are very aware that the United States is the primary refuge of the exiled Cuban moneyed class and does its bidding, even against its own commercial interests. Cubans know they will never be able to compete with their Miami cousins in a privatized Cuba. The U.S. embargo plays a vital role in neutralizing the threat of compensatory power represented by Cuban exiles and private finance in general. Where the U.S. embargo does not apply the Cuban government puts up barriers to mimic the embargo. Canadian and European entrepreneurs who invested in Cuba in the 1990s were obliged to work within partnerships that allowed them minority stakes without ultimate control over the enterprise or ownership of any land or assets. There is no legal or judicial framework for private enterprise in Cuba. There is no recourse against the government in a dispute.

Nearly all of the 1990s joint ventures failed, investors lost their money and today private foreign investment not backed by friendly governments such as Venezuela is nil. This is Cuba's self-imposed embargo at work. How much of it is by design and how much is sheer incompetence and bureaucracy is difficult to gauge. Without perpetual economic privation and a political/military state of siege with an outsourced origin both very real and imagined, the population would be unwilling to accept the awful living conditions, sacrifice and heavy handed restrictions that ensure dependency on the government for all the basic necessities of life. A relaxation of tensions and growth in trade would raise living standards and force the way to economic and political plurality. For the Cuban government to maintain a war footing in the face of new realities would de-legitimize its policies among core supporters, already on the defensive in the face of absurd restrictions and harassment of the population in the name of Cuban national security. The only option for Castro and company will be internal policy shift to the right, i.e. liberalization. Washington never understood this. Now is the time for Congress and President Obama to act on these internal Cuban realities without hecklers who haven't been to Cuba in fifty years screaming in the background.



1955 Chevy Bel-Air 4-door hardtop. Photo taken by the author

LA HISTORIA ME ABSOLVERA

3. 1 Portrait of the Revolutionary as a Young Man

There is a small, verdant park in the old section of Havana, not far from El Morro Castle. Every Sunday there's a book fair, and in one of the few examples of sanctioned non-governmental employment, independent, open-air booksellers sell old books and memorabilia for hard currency. One afternoon, while browsing a table, I chanced upon an original copy of Fidel Castro's collected letters from prison. The 94-page pamphlet was published in April, 1959 and featured on its cover a photograph of a baby faced Fidel Castro with a Department of Corrections serial number around his neck. The book was compiled and edited by Louise Conte Aguero, Fidel's closest confidant on the outside during his imprisonment on the island of Pines (renamed the Island of youth after 1959). Ironically, it was published by Editorial Lex at 259 Amargura (Bitterness) Street, surely one of the last private publishers in Cuba before the State took over. The pamphlet was in remarkably good condition for its age and I purchased it for two or three dollars, suspecting that I might have discovered important historical material. The seller, on the other hand, seemed wholly uninterested in the book's contents. He also had a number of original photographs of Fidel, Raul, Che,

Ernest Hemingway and Camilo Cienfuegos from the 1950s and 60s. I snapped those up for few dollars more as I tried to hide my excitement. It was like getting a steal on Ebay! I hurried back to the rented RV camper that served as my home during my stay to examine my find in more detail. Clearly, I had important artifacts. I took them back to the United States and kept them safe until 2007 as I prepared this book. In Bryant Park, New York City, at sunset and into the night, I read the letters one by one and took notes as I traveled back in time over fifty years into the mind of Fidel Castro. I wondered how different history might have been had, in 1959, American decision makers examined this freely available pamphlet and how relations between the two countries could have been different. Perhaps they knew but overlooked its significance. Maybe it was more expedient to just dismiss him as a Communist stooge to be gotten rid of. Indeed, President Eisenhower refused to meet with him on his U.S. victory tour after the 1959 triumph over Batista.

Vice President Nixon met with him and privately called him naive afterwards. Studying the prison letters would have significantly reduced the uncertainty about Fidel and his true intentions. They put a vulnerable, solitary and uncensored Fidel on display years before he actually wielded power. As a political prisoner accused of treason, he was at the complete mercy of the Batista regime and could have been killed at any moment. Fidel depended upon his wife, sister and comrades in arms like Aguero for material and emotional support. He nearly lost his mind while in solitary and poured himself into his letters to hold onto his sanity. Fidel's moral compass is on exhibit for all to see and his actions during the next 50 years can more or less be predicted or at least better understood after reading his prison letters.

3. 2 The Cuba Fidel Castro Knew

The roaring 1920s were a boom time for the United States and its Caribbean accouterments Cuba and Puerto Rico. Consumption and inflation increased along with soaring real estate, stock and commodity markets in the U.S. Demand for Cuban agricultural exports outstripped supply and that led to prosperity for Cuban sugarcane entrepreneurs like Angel Castro, a Galician transplant in Cuba's eastern province of Oriente (renamed Holguin). Nearly everything Cuba produced was destined for export to its

LUIS CONTE AGÜERO

*Anticipo
de una
Biografía de
Fidel Castro*



Cartas del Presidio

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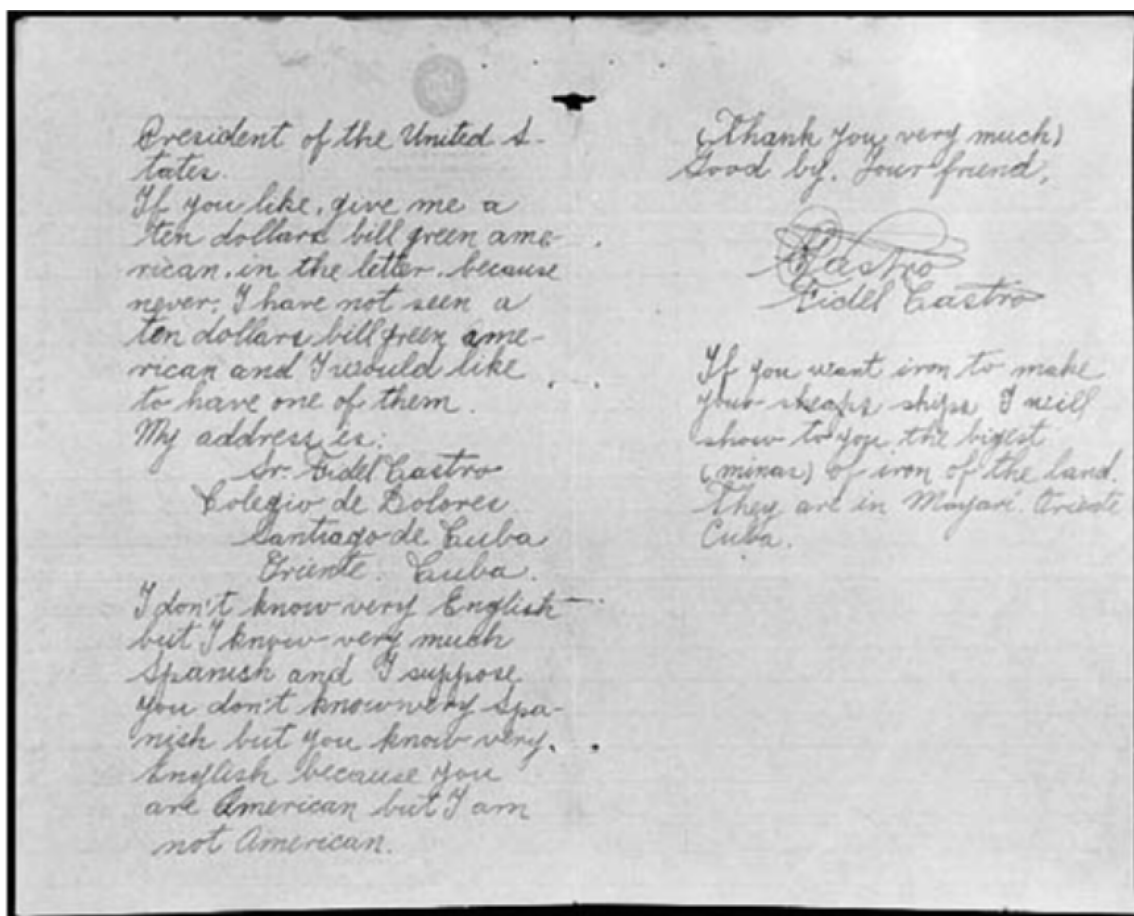
Had Kennedy been properly briefed on this pamphlet, he would not have been misled into believing the Bay of Pigs invasion would ignite a revolt against Castro. 50 years later, Obama advisors should study it

Ernest Hemingway and Camilo Cienfuegos from the 1950s and 60s. I snapped those up for few dollars more as I tried to hide my excitement. It was like getting a steal on Ebay! I hurried back to the rented RV camper that served as my home during my stay to examine my find in more detail. Clearly, I had important artifacts. I took them back to the United States and kept them safe until 2007 as I prepared this book. In Bryant Park, New York City, at sunset and into the night, I read the letters one by one and took notes as I traveled back in time over fifty years into the mind of Fidel Castro. I wondered how different history might have been had, in 1959, American decision makers examined this freely available pamphlet and how relations between the two countries could have been different. Perhaps they knew but overlooked its significance. Maybe it was more expedient to just dismiss him as a Communist stooge to be gotten rid of. Indeed, President Eisenhower refused to meet with him on his U.S. victory tour after the 1959 triumph over Batista.

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On November 6, 1940, Fidel Castro, age 12, congratulates F.D.R. on his election victory 2 days earlier. He asks F.D.R. to send him a green ten-dollar bill and invites him to mine for iron in Mayari.

giant northern neighbor while imports of manufactured goods bore the coveted label "Made in U.S.A."

The economic boom had its influence on architecture and fashion. In New York, the stupendous Chrysler and Empire State buildings reached for the sky. In Havana, the Hotel Nacional, unsurpassed in opulence and a magnet for movers, shakers and the glitterati of the world, opened its gilded doors to all those yearning to breathe free from the restrictions of Prohibition.

Among the Hotel Nacional's first illustrious guests were artists, actors and writers such as Johny Weissmuller (Tarzan), Buster Keaton, Jose Mujica, Jorge Negrete, Agustin Lara, Tyrone Power, Romulo Gallegos, Errol Flynn, Marlon Brando and Ernest

Hemingway, who donated a Blue fish specimen to the “Sirena” bar. The guest list includes well-known American gangsters Santos Traficante, Meyer Lansky, Lucky Luciano and Frank Costello. Patrons such as Winston Churchill, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, scientist Alexander Flemming, and innumerable Ibero-American heads of state and European monarchs backed the hotel’s reputation as a deluxe host.

It was during these prosperous and heady times that General Machado, veteran of the war of independence against Spain, seized power and one Angel Castro had a son in 1928. He named him Fidel, meaning faithful.

3. 3 Deflation Creates Political Instability

By the early 1930s, the economic good times were over and Prohibition was repealed. President Machado soon had problems governing the country as Cuba’s primary export, sugar, plummeted in price, causing massive unemployment and hardship. From Biran, a tiny outpost in sleepy but wild Oriente, Angel Castro sent his young, illegitimate son and his brother Ramon to live with an impoverished Haitian family in the big eastern city of Santiago. The Haitian consul Louis Hippolyte Hibbert, Angel Castro’s conduit for plantation laborers, would become young Fidel’s godfather.

With the stock market crash of October 29, 1929, Cuba, an appendage of the United States economy, fell into depression. The General Strike of 1933, known as the Revolution of 33, forced Machado out of power in August after eight years in power. To his credit, he tried to diversify exports and a sympathetic administration in Washington passed the U.S. Sugar Act of 1934, creating a large quota for Cuban sugar imports. While in office, Machado traveled frequently to the U.S. and spoke of his determination to “civilize” Cuba so that it could one day govern itself. He took credit for the assassination of Julio Antonio Mella (founder of the Cuban Communist Party) while exiled in México and persecuted Cuban labor leaders. Washington approved. Cuba was completely dependent on fruit exports and sugar monoculture backed by American investment and distribution. In addition, the Platt Amendment, which preceded Machado, gave the United States government the right to intervene in Cuba as necessary and, to the horror of Cuban nationalists, ceded Guantánamo Bay to the United States Navy as

a coaling station.

It was during this deeply troubled period in world history that Hitler came to power (1932), the Spanish Civil War began and the Japanese Empire commenced hostilities in Manchuria, igniting World War II in Asia. To many around the world, the 1930s deflationary depression heralded the end of Capitalism and the fulfillment of Marx and Lenin's prophecies.

Following Machado, Carlos Hevia was chief of state for all of 72 hours. Ramon Grau San Martín held the post for 100 days until a thirty-three year old, anti-Communist Army officer named Fulgencio Batista forced him to resign with the help of the United States Embassy. San Martín was replaced by Carlos Mediet y Montefour, who served for eleven months. He was followed by José Barnet y Vinejeras (five months) and Miguel Mariano Gómez in turn succeeded him. Federico Laredo Brú took office in 1940. During this chaotic period, the de facto ruler was Batista and in 1940 he actually won the presidential election and served for four years before retiring to Florida. But his life of golf and bridge was not to last.

Grau San Martín had attempted to appease the labor movement's demands by supporting legislation such as an eight-hour workday. He encouraged collective bargaining, forced utilities to lower their rates and insisted that fifty percent of all employees of foreign firms be Cuban. The American business community was furious. San Martín's brief government was never recognized by the United States. They wanted Batista back.

3. 4 It's the Family Feud! Come on Down!

Cuba is a small island in more than one sense of the word. I have always been amazed how I constantly run into the same people whenever I'm in Havana. It's hard to remain anonymous or keep a secret. Rumors, intrigue, spats and speculation flourish in this environment. So does nepotism, fratricide, internecine warfare and the personalization of politics.

Case in point. In October 1948, Fidel married Mirta Diaz-Balart, daughter of the mayor of Banes, Oriente. Banes happened to be Fulgencio Batista's hometown. Mirta was the sister of Rafael Lincoln Díaz-Balart (1926-2005), member of the Cuban House of Representatives. His son, Lincoln Díaz-Balart, is Fidel Castro's nephew. Today he is a Republican U.S. senator from Florida. He appears to spend every waking moment, not on issues affecting his constituents, but on how to take down Fidel. Senator Lincoln's brother is José Diaz Balart, a prominent South Florida television personality and co-anchor of Telemundo's "Cada Día".

In Cuba, ties of blood and marriage are no guarantee of fidelity. In 1955 Rafael Lincoln Diaz Balart opposed his brother in law Fidel's release under Batista's general amnesty. Had he prevailed, Fidel may have remained incarcerated and the history of Cuba would have taken an entirely different course. Rafael Lincoln Diaz-Balart became a senator in the Cuban legislature in 1958 and served until Batista fled the island the following year.

Former dictator Fulgencio Batistás grandson is Raoul G. Cantero III. Born in Spain, he is now a naturalized U.S. citizen and in 2006 was appointed to the Florida Supreme Court by Gov. Jeb Bush.

Juanita Castro Ruz, Fidel's younger sister, is a U.S. citizen. She resides in Miami and it is alleged that Miami exile Francesca Castro is one of Fidel's many illegitimate children. Fidel denies the claim. So much for family ties. Perhaps Ms. Castro will submit to a DNA test.

Cuban politics in 2009 follow the old patterns and are still intensely personal. In March, the two most visible and important figures (after Fidel and Raul, of course) in the Cuban government, outstanding party leaders credited with saving the Revolution during the Special Period and seen as successors to Raul, were summarily fired without due process of any kind. This is *prima facie* evidence that Cuba is a dictatorship.

Raul Castro removed the two noteworthy officials — Felipe Pérez Roque, the foreign minister equivalent to the U.S. Secretary of State, and Carlos Lage, the vice president and *de facto* economics czar (like Vice President Biden and Treasury Secretary Geithner rolled into one) — in advance of a party congress (like a party convention in the U.S.).

Cuban officials said that Mr. Pérez Roque and Mr. Lage had become too visible and that they had conveyed to foreign politicians false expectations about how the country would change and who would be in control of its direction.

Here is the real reason: The men were involved socially with a Cuban named Conrado Hernández, who was surreptitiously recording their conversations during reg-

ular parties at his ranch in Matanzas. Some of those recorded conversations, which Cuban officials recently discovered, included acerbic criticism and off-color jokes about various government leaders, including Fidel and Raúl Castro.

So there it is, plain to see. This is how things work in Cuba.

In 1948, twenty-one-year-old Fidel took his new bride on a honeymoon to New York City and rented an apartment in the Bronx for a few months. Rumor has it that he purchased his first Marxist classics during this period. According to Brian McDowell, Fidel had admired and collected Benito Mussolini's speeches as a student at the University Havana. Later in 1948, Fidel traveled to Columbia to agitate for a Youth Congress and got caught up in the insurrection known as the Bogotazo after the assassination of presidential candidate Gaitan in April, 1948. For the next ten years, Columbia was racked by violence.

Early on in life, Fidel had come to believe that he was destined for great things; everyone around him told him so. At 6'1," he was much larger and imposing than the average Cuban male. He excelled at sports and intellectual pursuits. By the time he arrived at the University of Havana in 1946 in a flashy, black Ford V8 that his prosperous father had given him, he was burning with ambition. He knew that university politics would be a stepping-stone to a larger stage. The campus chapter of the Orthodox Party gave him his cause and platform, but in a sense he remained a rebel without a cause. Then history gave him an opening: on March 10, 1952, General Batista, on the eve of losing the presidential election, staged a coup d'état with the help of the Mafia and the C.I.A. Now Fidel could organize an armed struggle in the name of the republic, of democracy, and in defense of the Constitution of 1940. In early speeches and writings, Fidel spoke of... the duty of free men to rebel against an unjust government... and... the obligation free people have to force change on their government.

3.5 Cartas del Presidio (Fidel Castro's Letters from Prison)

On July 17, 1954, Fidel, in prison, wrote to his best friend Luis, "I have just heard the 11 O'clock news on CMQ (A major radio station) that the Ministro de Gobernación

(Batista's government) has dismissed Mirta Díaz-Balart (Fidel's wife) from the pay-rolls."

"This is political maneuvering against me: The most filthy, cowardly, indecent, the most vile, and the most intolerable.

No matter how desperate her economic situation, Mirta is too smart to be induced to work for the government. I am sure that she has been slandered miserably.

This problem is impossibly difficult and sad for me. I will set the record straight and defend against this cowardly insult whatever the cost. I ask you to speak with Rafael, her brother, and ask him to explain what responsibility, what role he has had in this, and that you emphasize the gravity of the situation, the shame and the infamy of it....

I don't want to become a murderer when I get out of prison. Does not a political prisoner have honor? Cannot a political prisoner be offended? Can't a prisoner defend himself when he gets out of prison? Is he condemned to impotent grumbling and the desperation of bitter incarceration and infamy? I ask you to help me in this and to do in my name what you would do if you were in my situation. Right now, I am blinded by rage and I can't even think. I authorize you to make whatever declarations are necessary and to take any decision necessary in my name. I am ready to summon my own brother-in-law to court and fight him at the first opportunity. The prestige of my wife and my honor as a revolutionary are at stake. Do not delay. Hit back and cause as much damage as possible. I would rather die a thousand times over than suffer this offense."

Then in a letter dated July 31, 1954, Fidel confides, again to best friend Luis Conte Aguero (future editor of the pamphlet), "I never imagined that Rafael (Fidel's brother-in-law and Batista's Under Secretary of the interior) was such a scoundrel and was so corrupt. I can't imagine how he could so mercilessly sacrifice the name and the honor of his sister, (i.e. Mirta, Fidel's wife) damning her to eternal misery and shame; Pay no attention to his ruinous and miserable threats; My life is free of mistaken ideas and I am not afraid of any intrigue" (*from page 50*).

These passages refer to an incident in which Fidel's brother in law, the uncle of his baby son, surreptitiously issued a press release that Fidel's wife had been fired from her job as a government informant... implying that the wife of Cuba's most famous rebel (Fidel) supported the Batista dictatorship. The announcement drove Fidel mad with rage and exemplifies perfectly the impossibility of separating the personal from the political in Cuba. The spats and bickering between Fidel and his in-laws continues to this day and forms the ancient nucleus of the political hatred and intrigue across the Florida Straights today. U.S. foreign policy must not be influenced by it.

Fidel as a young man is consumed with history and destiny, heroism and sacrifice, honor, duty, greatness... He is in a perpetual state of indignation and outrage at historical injustice and slights, real and imagined. He is paranoid and martyrdom is always on his mind. Jose Marti, Antonio Maceo and Eduardo Chibas are his role models.

Eduardo Chibas was a popular radio program host in the 1940s and a member of the Orthodox Party, to which Fidel Castro also belonged as a student at the University of Havana. He spoke out against social injustice, and in one of the most sensational episodes in Cuban history, shot himself dead, during his weekly radio program, to protest Batista's coup d'état in 1952.

Chibás was one of the founders of the Orthodox party in 1948. This was a progressive party that wanted to address the social and economic problems of the country and was famous for demonstrations and agitation against the endemic corruption of political life. Chibás had his own radio program and for years used it as a soapbox to talk about the burning issues of the day in this era before television. He became very popular, and with his popularity became very influential. The conditioned power of Chibás was transformed into the organizational power of the Orthodox party, which made it a force in Cuban politics.

A parallel familiar to more readers would be the self-immolation of a Tibetan monk in South Vietnam circa 1967 that was captured on the American nightly news and seen by millions. It had a major psychological impact and was a blow against support for continuation of the war in Vietnam.

3. 6 La Historia Me Absolvera

Facing torture, capital punishment or decades in prison after the failed attack on the Moncada garrison, Fidel prepared his own defense before the magistrate who would

decide his fate. On October 15, 1953, in what would be known as the Moncada Program and would create a mold for polemics in the distant future with critics over democracy and human rights for the following half century, Fidel turned the accusations upside down and put the Cuban government under Batista on trial as a usurper in violation of the 1940 constitution. For Cuba, *La Historia Me Absolverá* has the historical weight of Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.

"...it is absurd that under a regime in which murderers and torturers live freely, don uniforms, and represent authority while honorable men waste away in prison for the crime of defending the Constitution that came from the people, liberty and the rights of man, for them there is no jail, no sentence, not even a trial. Moreover, they get absolute moral impunity without any voice accusing them. When so many have died valiantly fighting them and so many others suffer the ignominy of prison." (*Page 18, Cartas del Presidio*)

In both the *La Historia* and *Cartas del Presidio*, Fidel writes about the eight Cuban medical students shot down by the Spanish colonial overlords in 1871 for allegedly scratching the tombstone of a Spaniard. In Cuban history, the importance of this incident reminds one of Kent State in 1970 and the Boston massacre of 1770 in American history. Fidel's writings are drenched in obsession to defend the independence of Cuba, restore its honor and the sacred principles of revolutionary valor embodied by José Martí, the intellectual father of independent Cuba. No matter that Cuba devolve into a country run by one man for fifty years.

"Nine times Eight are the young men who fell at Santiago de Cuba through torture and lead, without any kind of trial and in the name of the hated and illegitimate usurper of the last sixteen months, without God, and without the Law, and a violator of the most noble Cuban traditions and the most sacred human principles that they would toss the remains of their victims into unknown places in the Republic that our liberators founded for Dignity and human decency in the very year of the centenary (1953) of the Apostle (José Martí). What was our crime? To carry out his sermon: "Cuando hay muchos hombres sin decoro, hay siempre otros que tienen en sí el decoro de muchos hombres. Esos son los que se rebelan con fuerza terrible contra los que les roban a los pueblos su libertad, que es robarle a los hombres su decoro."

3. 7 A Hero's Life that Would Have Made Richard Strauss Proud

Fidel Castro's political psychology, contradictory as it may be, is an amalgam of the Enlightenment's Rights of Man, a 19th century Romantic's sense of honor à la Alexander Hamilton and Alexander Pushkin; a Swiftian, Dickensian righteous indignation at class inequality and a 20th century Leninist concept of eternal Communist construction. Such a construct may be too contradictory to be compatible. Inside Cuba and out, Fidel Castro is the Revolution and the Revolution is Fidel and by blood and history it is Raul, but in a much more circumspect way. Structural dependency on one mortal is the Cuban government's biggest political liability. Without a foreign military and political existential threat, this liability will become unbearable. Meanwhile, for Fidel, there is no higher honor and duty than sacrifice "por la patria, por la revolucion y el socialismo." Translation: personal loyalty to *him*. Inevitably, however sublime his intentions were, dictatorship results.

Martyrdom is never far from his thoughts. The theme of death as a great cause nobler than living an unremarkable life and the preference for putting one's life at risk for the advancement of the nation permeate his speeches and expectation. Much later, the same ideals and the legend of Che Guevara would be shrewdly utilized to exhort millions of Cubans to labor for essentially no pay while average caloric intake plunged to near starvation levels after the collapse of the Soviet Union (The Special Period in Time of Peace)

"The brave ones who marched to their death smiling with the supreme happiness en los labios abrazados por la llama del deber." (On lips caressed by the flame of duty). They did well because they were not born to surrender to the miserable and hypocritical life of this time. That's why they died: Because they could not adapt to a repugnant reality. These contemplations remind me of the manly thoughts that agitated their restless brains, the indignant rebellion against such selfish and repugnant mediocrity, that desire to become a great example for their fatherland. Every day that goes by, their sacrifice is justified even more by Reason."

Principles, principles... for Fidel they were always non-negotiable. Imprisoned after Moncada, he refused to compromise with the Batista dictatorship to secure his own release, a pattern of intransigence that would continue during the most difficult challenges he faced during ten U.S. administrations. His eschewal of material things

and reputation for asceticism were crucial as he molded the new national character to accustom itself to perpetual hardship and privation. In characteristic form, Fidel turned poverty, want and scarcity, the result of a suffocating embargo and the population's total dependency on the sclerotic state run economy, into an endurance test of the will. Less became more. The capacity for suffering and ability to resist served the Cuban state as an ideological Cold War bulwark against the decadent, shameful consumerism represented by the United States in the Cuban media and imagination. Such is the irony of a country with a constitution founded on the principles of Marxism, whose ideal is superior living standards for the working class, that its unionized, government workers do not enjoy a subsistence wage. Instead, they work for intangibles. Cubans labor and sweat, albeit very inefficiently, with the knowledge that their needs will go unmet month after month, year after year. The primary reason for this is coercion and nationalism. Washington's wishful obsession with bringing down Castro, dressed up in theories about rational actors, is naive.

Excerpts from Fidel's Letters from Prison:

December 12, 1953 – My dear brother Luis Conte,

It is with the blood of my dead brothers that I write this letter. They are the only reason for my inspiration. We demand justice for them more than our own liberty. Justice, in this case, is not a monument to heroes and martyrs who fell in battle or who were murdered after battle. Not even is it a tomb where they rest in peace along with the others who lie sprinkled through the fields of Oriente, in many cases where only their murderers know their location; It isn't even possible to speak of peace for the dead in an oppressed land.

Posterity is more generous to those who are good. Posterity will raise the symbols and the generations of tomorrow will relive the tribute ode to those who rescued the fatherland's honor in these times of infinite shame. (Page 13)

Note that he is not giving a speech before masses of people. He's not grandstanding. He's writing from prison where it would seem improbable that in seven years he would be the Cuban head of state. Not even he, as we will see in other letters, knows or is certain of this. He isn't even sure if he'll get out of prison. He's serving twenty six years and many of his comrades have been killed or jailed.

"Creo tanto en el fondo del pueblo de Cuba, y tengo tanta fé en él, como desprecio y desconfianza por todo lo que flota en la superficie de nuestra sociedad cuajada de podredumbre. Tú eres un pedazo del fondo del pueblo que sobresale por encima del ambiente podrido." (Page 20)

Land reform and nationalization were on Fidel's mind long before the Soviet Union had an interest in Cuba:

“Por último, una ley que propugnaba la confiscación de todos los bienes de todos los malversadores de todas las épocas, previo un proceso sumarísimo de investigación. Te expongo todo esto, para que sepas que llevábamos un programa valiente y avanzado que constituía por smismo parte esencial de la estrategia revolucionaria. Nada pudo conocer el pueblo, porque adoptamos el criterio de no tomar las estaciones de radio hasta no tener asegurada la fortaleza para evitar cualquier masacre popular en caso de no tener éxito. El disco del último discurso de Chibás iba constantemente en el aire, lo cual daría fé instantanea de un estallido revolucionario independiente de los personeros del pasado.” (*Page 21*)

In 1953, in jail, Fidel's political program was by all appearances radical yet democratic:

“Nuestro triunfo habría significado un ascenso inmediato de la Ortodoxia al poder, primero provisionalmente y después, mediante elecciones generales. Tan cierto es esto en cuanto a nuestros propósitos que, aun fracasando, nuestro sacrificio ha significado un fortalecimiento de los verdaderos ideales de Chibás, dado el nuevo curso de los acontecimientos.”

“El reestablecimiento de la Constitución del 40, condicionada desde luego a la situación anormal, era el primer punto de nuestra proclama al pueblo.”

But he also says that after the reestablishment of the 1940 Constitution, six basic revolutionary laws would be decreed which are in favor of small colonos, arrendatarios, aparcero (sharecroppers)... the sacred right of the workers to participate in enterprise, the participation of colonos in 55% of sugar cane profits. “These methods should be carried out in a politically dynamic and energetic manner by the state, mobilizing the great reserves of national capital, and breaking the organized resistance of powerful interests.”

Clearly, Fidel's agenda went far beyond reestablishing the 1940 constitution. He wanted to restructure Cuban society to give the state a major role in the economy.

Another decree would be to “impoverish all of the judicial functionaries and administrators, provincial and national officials who had betrayed the constitution.”

Finally there would be a law confiscating all wealth of embezzlers of all times under a summary investigative process.

At the age of twenty-seven Fidel has one foot in the Rights of Man and the other in left-wing nationalism. He is still in formation. Communism and Moscow are not on his agenda but he would be obliged to choose and take sides after taking power.

Fidel as a young man was indignant, some would say disingenuous, at accusations that what he was after was power:

Fidel alludes to the Beer Hall Putsch (i.e. Hitler's attempted takeover of Germany in 1924) saying his group is not just a bunch of armed men trying to take over for power's sake. He rails against those who would suggest that his objective is a coup to replace Batista with another usurper:

"The Director should never have taken seriously sterile or ridiculous theories about a Putsch or a revolution, when it was really the time to denounce the monstrous crimes of the government, killing more Cubans in 4 days than they had in 11 previous years. Moreover, who has shown more faith in the masses of Cubans in their love of liberty and in their repudiation of dictatorship, and in their mature consciousness?

Do you think, Luis, that the uprising of the Maceo regiment on the morning of the 10th of March (1868) was a Putsch?

Is it that there is less consciousness today than there was on that morning of the 10th of October 1868? (*Page 22*)

"Lo que se mide en la hora de empezar el combate por la libertad no es el número de las armas enemigas, sino el número de virtudes en Pueblo. Si en Santiago de Cuba cayeron cien jóvenes valorosos, eso no significa sino que hay en nuestra patria cien mil jóvenes dispuestos también a caer. Búsquenseles, y se les encontrará.. Oriénteseles, y marcharán adelante por duro que sea el camino. Las masas están listas. Sólo necesitan que se les señale la ruta verdadera."

In these few pages, we have Fidel condensed and exposed. He says that if a hundred men can give up their lives, then there's a hundred thousand who can also die, and all they need is a leader who can show them the right path. He's comparing the attack on the Moncada garrison to the 10th of October of 1868, the beginning of thirty years of war. Fidel as a young man is fixated on the bloody history of Cuba, and committed to the historic mission of completing Martí's task as he sees fit. For Fidel, rebellion is elevated to a historic duty to overturn unjust government and resist an illegitimate usurper (Batista) of power.

Fidel Castro is laid bare for all to see, years before he had any authority in Cuba. His issues are agrarian reform, political reform and the 1940 Constitution. Communism is not in the mix. He sees himself as the living incarnation of José Martí, whose philosophy can be summed up by the verse: “I want to throw in my luck with the wretched of the earth.”

You may ask, what does all of this obscure minutia have to do with Cuba now? The answer is, everything. Kennedy authorized the Bay of Pigs disaster because he was misled and thought Cubans would revolt against Castro. Obama could make similar miscalculations when Raul dies.

3.8 Time Line of Events Leading to Castro’s Takeover

1956

June 24–July 3. In Mexico City, 28 Cuban revolutionaries and supporters are arrested. Castro is not released until July 24, and Che Guevara is released a week later.

November 25. On a 60-foot yacht named Granma, eighty-two men led by Fidel Castro depart for Cuba.

November 30. In Santiago de Cuba, three hundred young men led by Frank País in olive green uniforms and red and black armbands with the July 26 emblem attack police headquarters, the Customs House and the harbor headquarters.

December 2. The Granma lands in Las Coloradas, Oriente province, after being delayed by weather and logistical problems, including poor communications between the expeditionaries and the Cuban underground.

December 5. The rebels are surprised by Batista’s troops while resting on the edge of a cane field at Alegría de Pío, not far from the Sierra Maestra. The majority of the revolutionaries are killed or captured, but a few escape to the Sierra Maestra, in-

cluding the Castro brothers Fidel and Raúl, Che Guevara, Juan Almeida, Calixto García and a handful of others.

December 8. Don Cosme de la Torriente dies.

December 18. Twelve survivors of the Granma expedition regroup at Purial (in the foothills of the Sierra Maestra mountains) and organize the first guerilla unit.

December 21. Che Guevara and Juan Almeida join the others at Purial. At this point the Rebel Army consists of fifteen fighters with seven weapons, and they begin to move higher into the Sierra Maestra Mountains.

December 24. In Santiago de Cuba, members of the 26th-July Movement meet secretly to discuss support for the rebels in the Sierra Maestra.

1957

January. Cuban Defense Minister Santiago Rey visits Washington as an official guest of the U.S. government.

January 2. In Santiago, four youths are found dead in an empty building, including 14-year old William Soler. They had been arrested as suspects in revolutionary activities and tortured.

January 4. A procession of 500 women dressed in black and lead by William Soler's mother moves slowly through the streets of Santiago. They carry a banner: "Stop the murders of our sons."

January 17. The war opens with a successful rebel attack on a small army garrison at the mouth of the La Plata River. The Rebel Army has twenty-three usable weapons.

January 21. Lt. Angel Sánchez Mosquera leads a company of elite Batista troops into the Sierra Maestra mountains to search for the rebels. A larger unit lead by Major Joaquín Casillas follows.

February 9. Rebels are attacked by the Army at Altos de Espinosa and disperse for three days.

February 17. New York Times journalist Herbert Matthews arrives in the Sierra Maestra to interview Castro and the rebels.

March 11. In Santiago, Frank País is arrested for his participation in the November 30 uprising.

March 13. Student leader José Echeverría and a small group take over a radio station in Havana. He is killed while retreating to the university. In a simultaneous attack on the presidential palace, thirty-five rebels and five palace guards are killed.

March 30. Batista, who tells the press that there are no guerrillas in the Sierra Maestra Mountains, inaugurates the new Shell Oil refinery.

April 6. The Havana Hilton opens with a party attended by half of Batista's cabinet.

April 20. Under orders from Batista, Police Captain Esteban Ventura guns down four of the surviving student leaders of the March 13 Palace attack. The event is known as the 7 Humboldt Street massacre.

April 23. In the Sierra Maestra, U.S. journalist Robert Taber interviews Castro on film. The film is shown by CBS-TV in May.

May 10. In Santiago, at the trial of "Granma" survivors, Judge Manuel Urrutia declares that all should be acquitted. Two other judges send men to prison for varying periods of up to eight years.

May 14. Arthur Gardner, U.S. Ambassador to Cuba and a close friend of Batista, is removed from office. He is replaced a month later by Earl Smith.

May 18. In the Sierra Maestra, rebels receive a shipment of over two dozen automatic weapons and 6,000 rounds of ammunition (sent by the July 26 Movement in Santiago).

May 26. In Matanzas, a bomb seriously damages the old Tinguaro mill.

May 28. The first major battle of the war is a rebel attack on the El Uvero garrison in a small town south of the Sierra Maestra range. “For us,” writes Guevara, “it was a victory that meant our guerrillas had reached full maturity. From this moment on, our morale increased enormously, our determination and hope for victory also increased, and though the months that followed were a hard test, we now had the key to the secret of how to beat the enemy.”

June 4. United Press International (UPI) reports that 800 U.S.-trained and equipped Cuban troops will be sent to fight against the Rebel Army in the Sierra Maestra.

July 12. After days of discussion in the mountains, the Manifesto of the Sierra Maestra is issued, signed by Fidel Castro, Raúl Chibás and Felipe Pazos. Most of it is written by Castro and calls for all Cubans to form a civic revolutionary front to “end the regime of force, the violation of individual rights, and the crimes of the police.” Rebels ambush a column of army soldiers at Arroyo del Infierno.

July 21. Ernesto Che Guevara is the first fighter promoted by Castro to Commander. He is named head of the Second Rebel Army Column.

July 30. Chief of police Colonel José Salas Cañizares kills Frank País, a twenty-three-year-old leader of the July-26-Movement and a Castro ally.

July 31. In Santiago, a crowd of 60,000 attends a funeral march for Frank País. The crowds are too large for the police to control and the city closes down for three days.

August 15. A large number of arrests are carried out by Batista’s police, including: Francisco Pérez Rivas, María Urquiola Lechuga, Mercedes Urquiola Lechuga, José Manuel Álvarez Santa Cruz (student, age 17), Francisco Mieres Fernández (student, age 18), Manuel de Jesús Alfonso (age 15), Enrique Delgado Mayoral (age 18), Eliecer Cruz Cabrera (age 18), Eladio and Ignacio Alfonso Carrera (ages 16 and 18), José Herrera León (age 16), Ubaldo Fiallo Sánchez (age 20), Antonio Fernández Segura, Jorge Alvarez Tagle (age 19), Juan Fernández Segura, Francisco Gómez Bermejo (age 17), Pastor Valiente Hernández, Norberto Belanzoarán López and others.

August 20. At Palma Mocha, in the Las Cuevas region, the Rebel Army, lead by Fidel Castro, is victorious over Batista's army.

September 5. Members of the July-26-Movement in Cienfuegos attack the naval police headquarters and the garrison of the Rural Guards.

October. *Ex-president* of the Cuban Medical Association, Dr. Augusto Fernandez Conde, denounces the atrocities of the Batista regime at the World Medical Association meeting in Istanbul, Turkey.

November. *Officials* from the Authentic Party, Orthodox Party, Revolutionary Directorate, and others sign the Miami Pact. The Pact creates the Cuban Liberation Junta.

November 4. El Cubano Libre, (The Free Cuban) the newspaper of the Rebel Army, is published by Guevara in the Sierra Maestra.

November 29. Rebel captain Ciro Redondo is killed in battle at Mar Verde. He is posthumously promoted to commander.

December 6. Led by Lt. Lalo Sardiñas, rebel troops clash with Batista's army at El Salto.

December 10. The Hotel Riviera opens in Havana. (It costs \$14 million, most of it supplied by the Cuban government for Meyer Lansky.) The floorshow in the Copa Room is headlined by Ginger Rogers. Lansky complains that Rogers "can wiggle her ass, but she can't sing a goddamn note."

A weekly news magazine, Revista Carteles, reports that twenty members of the Batista government own numbered Swiss bank accounts, each with deposits of more than \$1 million.

By the late 1950's, American businesses own:
90% of Cuba's mines
80% of its public utilities
50% of its railways

40% of its sugar production
25% of its bank deposits

1958

Early in the year Batista receives \$1,000,000 in military aid from the U.S. All of Batista's arms, planes, tanks, ships, and military supplies come from the U.S. and a joint mission of the three branches of the U.S. armed forces trains his army.

February 24. On the 63rd anniversary of the beginning of Martí's War of Independence, Radio Rebelde begins transmission from "the free territory of Cuba."

March 1. Raúl Castro and Juan Almeida leave the Sierra Maestra with a column of sixty seven men to open a second front in the mountains north of Santiago, the Sierra Cristal.

In March forty-five civic institutions sign an open letter supporting the July-26-Movement, including the national organizations of lawyers, architects, public accountants, dentists, electrical engineers, social workers, professors, and veterinarians.

April 9. A national strike fails due to timing errors and lack of popular support. This is a serious setback for the rebels.

May. Batista launches a vast offensive against the guerillas in the Sierra Maestra Mountains.

May 25. In the Sierra Maestra Mountains, the Rebel Army holds the first peasant assembly attended by 350. Among the topics discussed is a plan for agrarian reform.

June 29. In Santo Domingo, on the Sierra Maestra Mountains, the rebels achieve a serious victory with many captured prisoners and supplies. (Prisoners are later released.)

July 11-21. The Battle of Jigüe lasts about ten days and marks a turning point in the war.

July 20. From the Sierra Maestra, Radio Rebelde broadcasts the text of the Caracas Pact, signed by Castro and others. It calls for armed insurrection to establish a

provisional government and an end for U.S. support of Batista.

September 4. In the Sierra Maestra, the Mariana Grajales Platoon is formed. It consists of women fighters.

September 18. The Rebel Army defeats Batista's forces at Yara.

September 27-28. The Mariana Grajales Platoon participates in the battle to destroy Batista's military garrison in Cerro Pelado, Oriente.

October 9. The Rebel Army creates a new front to operate in the Oriente province. Delio Gómez Ochoa commands this Fourth Front.

October 10. The Rebel Army issues Law no. 3 of the Sierra Maestra. It states that tenant farmers and sharecroppers are entitled to the land they work.

October 26-27. The Rebel Army captures the army garrison at Güinía de Miranda.

October 31. U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and his wife dine with the Cuban Ambassador at the Cuban Embassy in Washington to commemorate Teddy Roosevelt (who refused to allow the Cuban liberating army from entering Santiago in 1898).

November 2. The Rebel Army captures the army garrison at Alto Songo in Oriente province.

November 3. In a mock general election, Batista's presidential candidate, Andrés Rivero Agüero, is declared the winner.

December 9. The Rebel Army takes Baire and San Luis, in Oriente province.

December 9. In Havana, William D. Pawley meets with Batista for three hours, offering that the dictator retire to his home in Daytona Beach, Florida. Batista declines.

December 15-18. Che Guevara's column captures the city of Fomento.

December 19. The Rebel Army achieves victories at Jiguaní, Caimanera and Mayajigua (in Northern Las Villas).

December 22-25. The rebels capture the towns of Guayos, Cabaiguán, Placetas, Manicaragua, Cumanayagua, Camarones, Cruces, Lajas, Sagua de Tánamo, Puerto Padre and Sancti Spíritus.

December 27-28. The rebels capture Caibarién, Remedios and Palma Soriano.

December 26. U.S. native Alan Robert Nye is arrested by the Revolutionary Army in Baire, near Jiguany, and charged with a plot to assassinate Fidel Castro.

December 29. Che Guevara takes the city of Santa Clara and captures over 1,000 prisoners.

Terrence Cannon writes:

“The U.S. did not send in the Marines for one basic reason: it did not fear the Revolution. It was inconceivable to the U.S. policy makers that a revolution in Cuba could turn out badly for them. After all, U.S. companies owned the country.”

1959

January 1.

Batista flees to the Dominican Republic.

January 1- January 7

Fidel Castro and his comrades take power.

3. 9 The Rights of Man According To Fidel Castro

“Jean-Jaques Rousseau said with great eloquence in his Social Contract: ‘While a people sees itself forced to obey and obeys, it does well; but as soon as it can shake off the yoke and shakes it off, it does better, recovering its liberty through the use of the very right that has been taken away from it.’ ‘The strongest man is never strong enough to be master forever, unless he converts force into right and obedience into duty. Force is a physical power; I do not see what morality one may derive from its use. To yield to force is an act of necessity, not of will; at the very least, it is an act of prudence. In what sense should this be called a duty?’ ‘To renounce freedom is to renounce one’s status as a man, to renounce one’s human rights, including one’s duties. There is no possible compensation for renouncing everything. Total renunciation is incompatible with the nature of man and to take away all free will is to take away all morality of conduct. In short, it is vain and contradictory to stipulate on the one hand an absolute authority and on the other an unlimited obedience...”

Thomas Paine said that ‘one just man deserves more respect than a rogue with a crown.’

The people’s right to rebel has been opposed only by reactionaries like that clergyman of Virginia, Jonathan Boucher, who said: ‘The right to rebel is a censurable doctrine derived from Lucifer, the father of rebellions.’

The Declaration of Independence of the Congress of Philadelphia, on July 4th, 1776, consecrated this right in a beautiful paragraph which reads: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness; That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or abolish it and to institute a new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.’

The famous French Declaration of the Rights of Man willed this principle to the

coming generations: ‘When the government violates the rights of the people, insurrection is for them the most sacred of rights and the most imperative of duties.’ ‘When a person seizes sovereignty, he should be condemned to death by free men.’

– *Fidel Castro*
1953

Castro is a bugaboo hated by many and *Fidel* is an icon loved by many others but no informed person is oblivious to him. He may be the most polarizing figure of all time. His name is seared into the subconscious of every Cuban man, woman and child both in Cuba and in exile. The fetish around him is evident on television stations of both Havana and Miami and creates headwinds for an objective analysis. This will continue to be so after his death. In the 500 years since Cuba’s formation in to a colony, then a nation, Fidel Castro has personally dictated the development of the last fifty years and counting... the most recent 10% of Cuban history. Not even King Louis XIV could make such a claim. He is the only leader Cubans can remember. Fidelismo wields conditioned power in Cuba more substantial than all the accumulated American culture and a value absorbed over the years and thrives on conflict with it. But Fidel Castro didn’t achieve this on his own. The U.S. embargo unwittingly assisted in this development.

Fidel Castro Ruz (born 1928) is the illegitimate son of a successful Galician immigrant and his Cuban servant girl. Raised in tiny Biran, Holguin, a frontier town in Cuba’s version of the lawless west, he is the historical heir to the liberators Antonio Maceo and Jose Marti... the dictators Machado and Batista... and Grand Master Jose Capablanca, the Cuban prodigy who at the age of thirty-three beat Emmanuel Lasker to become chess champion of the world in 1921. He is both pope to the poor of the world and a diabolical despot; David versus Goliath and a demagogue.

After the triumphal arrival of the barbudos (bearded ones) in Havana on January 8th 1959, Fidel began to speak in the first person plural whenever he delivered one of his legendary, interminable speeches. It was a moment of conception, as it were, the real and imagined, holy and unholy melding of a revolution and its leader. Nevertheless, for years following 1959 little was known about his personal life and out of security concerns he was of no fixed address. After decades of corrupt politicians who pilfered the treasury and enriched their family and friends, Cuba’s new ruler had no interest in self-aggrandizement and vanity of the common sort. Ideology precluded it. His only interest was absolute power. Any overt show of concern for himself would have been

inappropriate even though he knew he was the sine qua non of the revolution. Foiled assassination attempts fueled his youthful legend but now as these pages are written the Grim Reaper is knocking and cannot be denied.

Even now in his retirement, the personality cult, sans the cult of personality a la Stalin, burgesses the quasi-religious faith of Cuba's loyal and ageing base. It remains to be seen how long the Cuban nation will soldier on, looking for cues from speeches of yesterday after he is gone.

Fidel Castro is stubbornness, righteousness, egalitarianism and now senility. Cubans adore and pity him while cursing the economic madness and political stagnation he has wrought. Exile is the answer for Fidelistas and regime changers alike. Facilitated by the Cuban Adjustment Act, it is the path of least resistance and is a key factor in the political longevity of Fidel Castro. No nascent civil disobedience or counter cultural movement ever grew to threaten his power. The Castro brothers have analyzed the Gorbachev experience and are determined not to have Cuba follow down the same road. Their ultimate test will be how long they can influence events in Cuba from the grave. External pressure to force political plurality is a threat to the managerial and military elites and will continue to retard reformers as long as the Cuban head of state, a Castro or not, sustains the Cuban people's belief that he will defend them against powerful moneyed interests from abroad. The first Cuban leader after Raul will have to be charismatic and swift on his feet if he is to resist Miami Cubans' pent up desire to rule the island.

How is it that Fidel held on while Communism collapsed across Europe? If the absence of a "Velvet Revolution" can be explained by Cuba's formidable K.G.B. trained internal security and absence of Glasnost, why was there never a Tiananmen Square moment? The answer lies in Fidel's conditioned power and the existential threat from the U.S.A., real and hyped up as needed. There is a relationship between the two that must be understood.

Living standards in Cuba were below what Polish, East German and Soviet citizens had under Communism and Cubans have a predilection to make the invidious comparison of their lot to the American way of life forty-five minutes away by plane. So why didn't they revolt against Castro? The answer is in four parts.

1. Fidel's conditioned power of persuasion. During the apocalyptic Cuban depression of the 1990s, imports fell by 75%. The privation was far worse than the Great

Depression of the 1930s. Tens of thousands of Cuban's who hadn't had a decent meal in three years tossed themselves into the sea and spontaneous demonstrations broke out in Havana in 1994. Tensions were boiling and there was a danger that the army and police would use lethal force against civilian demonstrators. Fidel understood how delicate the situation was, mounted an open jeep and spoke directly to protestors. As soon as agitated crowds realized that he was within earshot, they started chanting "Viva Fidel! Viva Fidel." They dispersed spontaneously.

Such is the power he has on the Cuban psyche.

2. The 1959 Revolution was an indigenous popular uprising against Batista. Fidel's preternatural abilities to induce cooperation were first deployed to fund raise (in Miami, ironically) for and then organize an armed rebellion against a real usurper (Batista). This gave him (and the 1959 revolution) legitimacy impossible to deny. Washington needs to know that Fidel and the Cuban government have always been nationalist, Communist and internationalist, in that order. Under duress and after his death, nationalism will remain potent. The central European communist states did not have any of these factors in their favor. The old Hungarian, Romanian and Bulgarian monarchies were puppets alongside Hitler's armies. Their nationalists were Fascists whose ideology lay in ruins. For centuries the Poles suffered under Russian domination that even Lenin condemned and East Germany was the defeated, divided and indebted vassal state of Stalin and his heirs. The leaders of the "People's Democracies" were Communists first and last and their allegiance was to the Soviet Union. With the exception of Czechoslovakia, Communism was forcibly installed on bayonets. Subservience to Moscow de-legitimized unelected rulers of people obligated to profess an ideology in conflict with their own nationalist tendencies. Anti-communist uprisings in East Germany (1953), Hungary (1956), Czechoslovakia (1968) and Poland (1980) were the natural response by people who felt smothered by an aggressive alien power.

In Yugoslavia, a brilliant revolutionary similar to Fidel Castro united Croat, Serb and Bosniak (Muslim) and commanded a legitimacy never achieved by Soviet satellites. His conditioned power was the glue that held the nation together. After he passed, all hell broke loose.

The natural instinct to be free of outside control, paradoxically a libertarian sentiment, works in the wily Fidel's favor as a Communist, but as a Communist second, nationalist first.

3. Cuban Security Services

Cuba's security and intelligence agencies are among the best in the world. They are the beneficiaries of decades of K.G.B. experience and advice. They have infiltrated every dissident group in Cuba and every exile group in Miami. They are superb double agents. One of the most astonishing examples is Juan Pablo Roque. In 1995 he defected to the U.S. as the sole pilot of one of Cuba's most advanced MiG fighters. The exile community was ecstatic and considered him their hero. He was inducted into a Miami church where a young single mother of two children who had left Cuba 30 years earlier fell in love with him. They started dating. Ana Roque, his bride to be, said he was like a knight in shining armor. He had a master's degree in history and had been a major in the Cuban Air Force but was also a handy man. Smitten, she married him in April 1995. Eleven months later Mr. Roque disappeared. He resurfaced in Cuba and denounced Miami exiles as traitors. He condemned Brothers to the Rescue, the violent anti-Castro group that lost two Cessna airplanes to an air-to-air missile fired by a Cuban MiG on February 24, 1996.

Miami exile leaders, many of whom counted him as a friend, were stunned. Mrs. Roque, who loved him, was devastated. She was left to mourn her loss but also to deal with an emotionally charged exile community grieving for the four men who died.

Disconsolate but speaking through her pain to dispel any suspicion that she may have known of her husband's plans, she maintains that she knew him better than anyone and does not believe he is a "traitor."

As a spy, Mr. Roque was generous to his targets. He informed on Brothers to the Rescue and other Miami anti-Castro groups to the Cubans but also to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which had him on its payroll since 1993. But he also told on the Cuban military to the exile groups, writing a book, "Deserter," that was published by the Cuban American National Foundation.

Ana Roque conceded that Mr. Roque missed his two children in Cuba terribly -- he talked to them twice a month and sent packages -- and the couple argued over her refusal to have another child. She said he was frustrated, a former pilot working for \$4.50 an hour in clerical and construction jobs. In newspaper interviews she said he suffered

rejection from exiles that she said suspected him of being a spy because of his military background. But doors had started to open in his final months in Miami and he started working in the parts department at an aviation company and as a personal trainer. She believed that he had plans to revalidate his master's degree so he could teach. But it was not to be. It was all a smokescreen by a disciplined agent of Fidel Castro.

In an interview from Cuba with C.N.N., Mr. Roque railed against "right-wing rhetoric" in Miami. He said he did not reveal his intentions to his wife because she was blind to "what was happening."

So thorough was the deception that Mrs. Roque was in denial for months. She insisted that the Roque's life in Florida -- a three-bedroom house in western Dade County, with the wedding and family pictures in the living room and the half-done paint job her husband will never finish -- was not a sham. Her children, an 11-year-old son and a 12-year-old daughter, were estranged from their father and Mr. Roque became a loving substitute, helping them with homework and picking them up at school. She said that as a husband he was faithful, affectionate and protective, and would call her if she was late from the supermarket. "I don't doubt that he loved me," she said. I suspect his love for the Revolution was far greater. The acme of seduction is to leave a mark believing in you even after s/he has been played for a fool. American author Robert Greene has written incomparable tracts on this topic.

Then there is the remarkable case of Ana B. Montes, an American spy for Cuba who risked and lost everything for the Revolution and never got a cent for her trouble.

Ana Belen Montes, an intelligence analyst who was the Pentagon's top expert on Cuba, pleaded guilty to espionage, admitting that she spied for the Cuban government for 16 years because she opposed United States policy toward Havana. Ms. Montes, 45 years old in 2002, acknowledged in Federal District Court that she had revealed the identities of four American undercover intelligence officers and provided the Cuban authorities with reams of other secret and top-secret military and intelligence information. She was not paid for her efforts, lawyers in the case said, and was just reimbursed for some travel expenses. "Ms. Montes engaged in the activity that resulted in this charge because of her moral belief that United States policy does not afford Cubans respect, tolerance and understanding," her lead lawyer, Plato Cacheris, said in a statement. "Ms. Montes was motivated by her desire to help the Cuban people and did not receive any financial benefits."

Under her plea bargain, Ms. Montes was sentenced to twenty five years' imprisonment and five years' probation on a single count of conspiracy to commit espionage. She was obliged to submit to extensive debriefings and lie-detector tests by American intelligence and law-enforcement officials who will try to assess the damage she caused to

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Brothers to the Rescue, which welcomed Mr. Roque as a pilot only to have him label them as terrorists, was stunned. Mrs. Roque had met Mr. Roque at her Baptist church in 1992 only days after he fled Cuba by snorkeling over to the American base in Guantanamo. She was heartbroken.

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3. 10 The Cuban Five

The Cuban Five are five Cubans, two of whom are naturalized U.S. citizens, convicted of conspiracy of espionage against the United States in 2001 in federal court and sentenced from fifteen years to life. All of them were long term U.S. residents who had sought asylum under the pretense of fleeing Cuba. They were essentially sleeper cells for the Cuban government. Miami Cubans were appalled and outraged. I doubt the accused received a fair trial. The Five were arrested in Florida in 1998 and proclaim their innocence because their targets were violent Miami groups such as Alpha 66, Omega 7 and C.O.R.U., not the U.S. government. The Cuban government for its part maintains that terrorists based in and tolerated by the United States have killed 3,478 Cubans. The prosecution argued that the Five also attempted to infiltrate the U.S. Southern Command. Sounds plausible. The Five will probably be swapped for jailed Cuban dissidents in the future. They are:

- Fernando Gonzalez Llord, sentenced to nineteen years.
- Rene Gonzalez Shewerert, a native of Chicago born to Cuban parents sympathetic to Castro. He was a decorated veteran of Angola and after immigrating to the U.S. he worked as flight instructor when he wasn't spying on anti-Castro groups. He was sentenced to fifteen years and his wife was deported to Cuba in 2000.
- Gerardo Hernandez Nordelo, sentenced to two life terms plus fifteen years.
- Ramon Labanino Salazar, sentenced to life imprisonment plus eighteen years.
- Antonio Guerrero Rodriguez, a U.S. citizen sentenced to life plus ten years.

Fernando González Llord stated at his sentencing “If it were not very clear to me that the fanaticism, hatred and irrationality felt towards Cuba are generated and stimulated by only a minority segment of the Cuban-American community living here, I would not have agreed to be represented by a member of that community. His [Joaquin Mendez] professional approach to this case shows that, contrary to what those who control the Hispanic media would like to make everyone believe, with their stridently anti-Cuban stance, the majority of the Cuban-American community in Florida has a ra-

tional attitude towards their country of origin, even when they hold opinions that differ with the government of Cuba.”

“I initially thought the prosecution would come to this courtroom today to request that I be sentenced to one year of probation. After all, that was what this same District Attorney’s Office offered Mr. Frómeta when he bought a Stinger missile, C-4 explosive, grenades and other weapons from an undercover government agent. It did not even matter that Mr. Frómeta confessed to the undercover agent himself his terrorist intentions and the murderous, unscrupulous use that would be made of these materials.”

“The activities of the Cuban-American terrorist and paramilitary groups based in South Florida have been used as instruments of this country’s foreign policy towards Cuba through their direct organization by U.S. government agencies, the support given by these agencies to the extremist groups that perpetrate the acts, or by simply allowing them to operate without real persecution or with benevolent treatment when someone has actually been arrested. The terrorist groups of the Miami Cuban ultra-right wing were created, trained and financed by the C.I.A. This has always been abundantly clear to the Cuban people. If there are still any doubts among those present in this courtroom, they need merely take a look at the documents declassified by the United States government itself in 1997 and 1998, which clearly expose the decisions adopted by this country’s top leaders. One of these documents refers to a meeting attended by high-level officials, headed up by the vice president at the time, Richard Nixon...

“The Cuban-American National Foundation (C.A.N.F.) became the Cuban community’s most influential organization, due to its economic resources and the influence it exerted over key politicians in the United States’ government structure. Its strategy was to work towards the adoption in Congress of measures aimed at economically strangling the Cuban people, with the false hope that this would lead them to rise up against the revolutionary government, while at the same time, a wave of terrorist attacks against Cuba would be organized and financed from Miami, with the goal of damaging the already recovering economy. This wave of terrorist acts against tourism facilities in Cuba was financed and organized by the C.A.N.F. The head terrorist, Luis Posada Carriles, acknowledged to The New York Times his responsibility for the planning of these attacks and the financing of them with money from that organization. In articles published by the newspaper on July 12 and 13, 1998, Posada Carriles tacitly admitted that he functioned as the armed wing of the C.A.N.F...”

“What can Cuba do to defend its people, when boats leaving Florida loaded with weapons to attack Cuba are seized by the U.S. authorities, and those authorities are satisfied with explanations like, “We’re lobster fishing”? We heard this in this very courtroom from an A.T.F. agent who intercepted a boat loaded with weapons and maps

of Cuba just forty miles off its coasts. On July 23, 1998, the Miami Herald reported comments made by terrorist Tony Bryant, who laughed over how he was questioned by F.B.I. officials after his boat was found near Havana with explosives on board. According to what Bryant told the newspaper, he promised he would not do it again, and they let him go. What can Cuba do when terrorists like Virgilio Paz and José Dionisio Suárez, who blew Orlando Letelier [the Chilean diplomat] and Ronnie Moffit to bits in this country's capital and were then fugitives from the law, serve only seven years of their sentences and are then back on the streets thanks to the assistance of the C.A.N.F., which paid for their legal defense? I know of cases of reentry that have been given longer sentences than that."

Rene Gonzales Shewerert said: "we have a prosecutor like Mr. Kastrenakes who defends José Basulto's right to break the law as long as it is announced on television. We have an expert on terrorism like Mr. Hoyt, who believes that ten explosions in a one-year period would constitute a wave of terrorism in Miami, but not in Havana. We have an air safety expert for whom the acts of provocation perpetrated by Brothers to the Rescue against Havana, widely publicized on television, would be a different thing if they were perpetrated against Washington, because they would be, according to him, more urgent and verifiable. We have people who for forty years have publicly advertised themselves as terrorists, yet the prosecutors to my left only seem to have noticed it when they testified in this case for the defense. Agents Angel Berlingueri and Héctor Pesquera, the latter no less than the head of the local F.B.I., proudly appear as guests on the same radio stations, with the same people and on the same programs that violate federal laws by openly raising funds to organize terrorist activities or defend terrorists around the world.

3.11 U.S. Embargo

In January 1961, the Eisenhower administration, with only a few days in office, broke off diplomatic relations with Cuba. By 1963 all commercial activity with Cuba was prohibited in an attempt to bring down Castro. What began as a strategic political move by a consummate military man to snuff out a successful insurgency morphed into a military defeat (Bay of Pigs) and apocalyptic Cold War brinkmanship for Kennedy and then devolved into a domestic political football game. Through it all, Castro, by surviving, made the only touchdown.

3. 12 Synopsis of events from day one of the Revolution to the end of 1979

1959

January 1. Revolutionary forces take control of Havana. At about 2 a.m., Batista, his family and closest associates, board a plane at Camp Columbia and leave Cuba forever. Che Guevara and Camilo Cienfuegos lead the rebels into Havana.

In Santiago de Cuba, Oriente Province, Castro makes a victory speech that includes the following: “This time the revolution will not be frustrated! This time, fortunately for Cuba, the revolution will achieve its true objective. It will not be like 1898, when the Americans came and made themselves masters of the country.”

January 2. Manuel Urrutia is installed as President and Jose Mira Cardona as Prime Minister. *January 7.* Castro arrives in Havana. The U.S. government officially recognizes the new Cuban government.

January 10. Earl Smith, U.S. Ambassador to Cuba, resigns. Philip Bonsal replaces him.

January 11. Throughout the island, Batista’s henchmen and former police are executed in firing squads after being prosecuted in military tribunals.

January 12. In Santiago de Cuba, 75 men are executed. The group allegedly represents former police guards known for cruelty and violence and members of former Senator Rolando Masferrer’s private army.

January 13. Castro declares that the trials will go on “until all criminals of the Batista regime are tried.”

January 23. At a public military tribunal held at the sports stadium in Havana, Major Jesus Sosa Blanco (of Batista’s Army) is sentenced to death before an exited crowd of 18,000 spectators and 300 reporters. Serving as judges for the military tribunal are Dr. Humberto Sori Marin, Major Raul Chibas, and Major Universo Sanchez.

At night, a group of about 100 women dressed in black protest the executions of “counter-revolutionists.”

January 31. Former Batista Army Captain Pedro Morejon is sentenced to death in Havana for “assassination, homicide, robbery, incendiarism and damage.”

February 7. Cuba’s Constitution of 1940 is reinstated (it was suspended by General Batista after his coup in 1952).

February 16. Fidel Castro, Commander of the Rebel Army, replaces Miró Cardonas as Prime Minister of the Revolutionary Government.

February 18. Major Jesus Sosa Blanco (of Batista’s Army) is executed at the ancient moat of La Cabanya Fortress.

February 22. In Havana, two members of Rolando Masferrer’s private army are captured after a shootout in which two policemen and a civilian are wounded.

February 28. Castro announces that general elections will be held in Cuba in two years. Quoted in the N.Y. Times, he says: “Elections could not be held now because they would not be fair. We have an overwhelming majority at present and it is in the interest of the nation that the political parties become fully developed and their programs defined before elections are held.”

March 3. The Cuban government nationalizes the Cuban Telephone Company, an affiliate of I.T.T., and reduces telephone rates.

March 19. As of this day, 483 total “war criminals” have been executed by firing squads. An editorial in the front page of Revolution calls for an end to the executions.

March 24. Military trials and executions are suspended during Easter week.

March 26. Five men are arrested for a conspiracy to kill Premier Fidel Castro: Roberto Corral Miramon (Café owner), Roberto Lopez Paz (former Batista soldier), Roberto Perez Merens, Jose Sosa Mojena and Andres Arango Chacon. Allegedly the plot also involves pro-Batista exiles Rolando Masferrer and Ernesto de la Fe.

April 8. Heriberto Bertematy Rodriguez is sentenced to death for trafficking and selling marijuana.

April 11. Alan Robert Nye, a lieutenant in the U.S. Naval Reserve, goes on trial in Havana. He is accused of plotting to kill Fidel Castro. Prosecuting attorney Lieutenant José Antonio Suarez asserts that Nye received \$100,000 from the ousted Batista regime. The trial takes place at the Cabana Fortress, across Havana Bay, in front of about 200 spectators that include army personnel as well as foreign and local reporters..

April 13. In Havana, after a public trial that lasts 7 hours, Alan Robert Nye (a thirty-one-year-old American from Chicago) is convicted in a plot to assassinate Cuban Prime Minister Fidel Castro. He is sentenced to death, but is allowed to leave the island as long as he never returns.

April 15-26. Castro visits the U.S. as a guest of the American Society of Newspaper Editors.

May 17. Castro signs the Agrarian Reform Act, which expropriates over 1,000 acres of farmlands and forbids foreign land ownership.

June. In Cairo, Che Guevara makes the first official Cuban government contact with the Soviet Union.

July 16. President Urrutia resigns, and Osvaldo Dorticós Torrado becomes Cuba's 1^{9th} president.

July 26. Castro returns to his post of Prime Minister.

American journalist Walter Lippmann writes:

“For the thing we should never do in dealing with revolutionary countries, in which the world abounds, is to push them behind an iron curtain raised by ourselves. On the contrary, even when they have been seduced and subverted and are drawn across the line, the right thing to do is to keep the way open for their return.”

October 15. Raúl Castro becomes Defense Minister (the title is later changed to Minister of the Armed Forces).

October 19. Huber Matos, a leading figure in the revolutionary war, resigns his post as military commander of Camagüey province, along with fourteen officers, because of the “rising influence of Communism” in the revolution. Camilo Cienfuegos arrests him for treason.

October 25. Camilo Cienfuego’s plane mysteriously disappears during a night flight.

December 15. Huber Matos is sentenced to twenty years in prison for conspiracy and treason.

December 17. The Army announces that death sentences will not be carried out during the Christmas season.

From: “Cuba, A Short History,” Edited by Leslie Bethell. “Of the twenty-one ministers appointed in January 1959, twelve had resigned or had been ousted by the end of the year. Four more would go out in 1960 as the revolution moved toward a Marxist-Leninist political system.”

1960

January 18. The C.I.A. creates the Cuba Task Force, and Jacob D. Esterline begins a draft version of what becomes “A Plan of Covert Action Against Cuba.”

February 6. Soviet Deputy Prime Minister Anastas Mikoyan arrives in Havana.

The visit results in a trade agreement in which the Soviet Union will purchase 5 million tons of sugar over a five-year period. The Soviets will also supply Cuba with crude oil, petroleum products, wheat, iron, fertilizers and machinery. Included is \$100 million in credit at 2.5 percent interest. The Soviet Union fills the commercial vacuum left by the United States.

February 26. A U.S. Federal Court orders Rolando Masferrer Rojas to limit his movements to the New York area.

February 29. U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles rejects an offer from Cuba to begin negotiations (because of Cuba's condition that the U.S. take no unilateral action that could damage the Cuban economy while the talks are in progress).

March 4. The French ship La Coubre explodes in Havana harbor, killing dozens of soldiers and workers. The ship carried a batch of Belgian small arms.

March 13. An article in the New York Times, "The Other Miami-City of Intrigue," lists 5 anti-Castro groups operating in Miami.

March 17. President Eisenhower approves a covert action plan against Cuba that includes the use of a "powerful propaganda campaign" designed to overthrow Castro. The plan includes:

- a) the termination of sugar purchases
- b) the end of oil deliveries
- c) continuation of the arms embargo in effect since mid-1958
- d) the organization of a paramilitary force of Cuban exiles to invade the island.

April 19. The first shipment of Soviet oil arrives in Havana.

May 8. Cuba and the Soviet Union establish diplomatic relations.

May 17. Radio Swan, an anti-Castro radio station created by the U.S. Central

Intelligence Agency (C.I.A.) goes on the air as part of the Eisenhower-approved plan for covert operations. By summer, several clandestine and C.I.A.-funded stations in the U.S. join Radio Swan in broadcasting to Cuba.

June. In the U.S., the Frente Revolucionario Democrático (F.R.D.) is formed by Cuban exiles to oppose the government of Fidel Castro. The F.R.D. consolidates five existing anti-Castro groups: the Movimiento de Rescate Revolucionario, headed by Manuel Antonio Varona; Movimiento Democrático Cristiano, headed by José Ignacio Rasco; Movimiento de Recuperación Revolucionario, lead by Manuel Artime; Asociación Montecristi, of Justo Carillo; and the Frente Nacional Democrático (Triple A), lead by Aureliano Sanchez Arango. Manuel Artime is put in charge of military activity and remains the main link to the C.I.A.

June 7. Shell, Esso, and Texaco, refuse to refine Soviet oil (it is now known that the U.S. government encouraged this). At the same time, U.S. companies, under pressure from the U.S. government, refuse to sell fuel to Cuba.

June 16. U.S. diplomats Edwin L. Sweet and William G. Friedman are arrested at a meeting of counterrevolutionary conspirators. They are charged with “encouraging terrorist acts, granting asylum, financing subversive publications and smuggling weapons. They are immediately expelled from Cuba.

June 29. Cuba nationalizes the Texaco oil refinery.

July 1. Cuba nationalizes Esso and Shell oil refineries.

July 3. In response to these seizures, the U.S. congress passes the “Sugar Act,” eliminating Cuba’s remaining sugar quota.

July 5. Cuba retaliates by nationalizing all U.S. businesses and commercial property.

July 6. President Eisenhower cancels the 700,000 tons of sugar remaining in Cuba’s quota for 1960.

July 8. The Soviet Union announces that it will purchase the 700,000 tons of sugar cut by the U.S.

July 23. China agrees to purchase 500,000 tons of sugar from Cuba each year for five years. This is the first commercial treaty between the two countries.

August. The Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) is founded. Raúl Castro's wife, Vilma Espín Guilloys, runs it.

September 15. The U.S. government in New York seizes three Cuban airplanes. The planes belong to a Cuban delegation visiting the United Nations that includes Premier Fidel Castro. (The planes are eventually released on September 28 on the grounds of diplomatic immunity.)

September 15. Sixteen cigar factories, fourteen cigarette plants and twenty tobacco warehouses are seized and nationalized, including the H. Upmann factory (home of Montecristo), and Partagas.

September 17. Cuba nationalizes all U.S. banks, including First National City Bank of New York, First National Bank of Boston and Chase Manhattan Bank.

September 18. Fidel Castro goes to New York to address the United Nations General Assembly.

September 26. At the United Nations in New York, Fidel Castro speaks before the General Assembly. "Although it has been said of us that we speak at great length," he says to open his speech, "you may rest assured we shall endeavor to be brief." The speech lasts 4.5 hours.

September 26. Four boats set out from Miami to invade Cuba under the leadership of Rolando Masferrer Rojas. Only one of the boats reaches Cuba, and three Americans are eventually executed as a result: Allan D. Thompson, Anthony Zarba and Robert O. Fuller.

October 13. As Urban Reform Law No. 890 goes into effect, 382 locally owned firms, including sugar mills, banks and large industries, are nationalized.

October 19. U.S. imposes a partial economic embargo on Cuba that excludes food and medicine.

October 24. Cuba nationalizes additional properties owned by American interests in response to the economic embargo imposed by the U.S.

October 30. In Guatemala, the newspaper La Hora reports that preparation for an invasion of Cuba is “well under way.”

December 6. In a cable from Havana to Washington, the U.S. embassy reports “during the past three months the popular support of the Castro regime has dropped markedly. The government is determined to suppress the opposition at any cost. It has accumulated a substantial quantity of military hardware from the Soviet bloc and is making great efforts to train the military in their use... It is not likely that the Castro regime will fall without considerable bloodletting and destruction of property.”

December 14. The United Nations adopts Resolution 1514 (XV), which declares that “colonialism in all its forms and manifestations” must come “to a speedy and unconditional end.”

December 26. A dozen Cuban children travel from Havana airport to the U.S., beginning Operation Pedro Pan.

In the first two years of the revolution, Cuba loses more than 50% of its doctors and teachers.

1961

“By 1961, over 100,000 political émigrés had gathered in the United States. And this number was only a fraction of those who had tried to get out but could not.” - Theodore Draper, *Castro’s Revolution: Myths and Realities*.

January 1. The national literacy campaign begins in Cuba.

January 2. At the U.N. Security Council, Cuba charges that the U.S. is preparing an invasion.

January 2. In a speech, Castro demands that U.S. embassy staff be reduced to eleven, the same number as Cuba’s embassy in Washington. He refers to the U.S. embassy as a “nest of spies.”

January 2. Weapons from the Soviet bloc are displayed in a parade in Havana. Included are rocket launchers, truck-pulled field artillery, heavy tanks, anti-aircraft and anti-tank guns.

January 3. The U.S. breaks off official diplomatic relations with Cuba.

January 23. In U.S. News & World Report, Dr. Miró Cardona predicts a “general uprising” in Cuba. He says, “After the uprising, there will have to be a military decision on whether to help the people with a mass invasion or with a continuation of the infiltration by specially trained men. It is impossible at this point to decide whether a mass invasion will be necessary.”

January 25. Eloy Gutierrez Menoyo and members of the Second Front of Escanbray during the revolution arrive in Key West, Florida, on a fleet of three fishing boats.

February 1. In the Communist newspaper L’Unita (from Italy), Castro is asked by journalist Arminio Savioli about his opinion of Cuba’s Communist Party. Castro replies: “It is the only Cuban party that has always clearly proclaimed the necessity for radical change of structure, of social relationships. It is also true that at first the Communists distrusted me and us rebels. It was a justified distrust, an absolutely correct position, ideologically and politically. The Communists were right to be distrustful because we of the Sierra, leaders of the guerrillas, were still full of petty-bourgeois prejudices and defects, despite Marxist reading. The ideas were not clear to us, though we wanted with all our strength to destroy tyranny and privileges. Then we came together, we understood each other, and began to collaborate. The Communists have given much blood, much heroism, to the Cuban cause. Now we continue to work together. Loyally and fraternally.”

February 16. Lino Fernandez and 500 of his men (who oppose the revolution) are captured and taken to jail in Santa Clara.

March 1. At least ten violations of Cuban airspace by hostile airplanes are reported.

March 9. President of Ecuador, Josh Maria Velasco Ibarra, announces U.S. de-

mands that his country break off diplomatic relations with Cuba as a condition to the approval of various loans.

March 11. Major William A. Morgan (of Toledo, Ohio) and Major Jesus Carerras Zayas, both former military aides to Castro, are executed in Havana for treason.

March 18. A number of leaders opposing the revolution are arrested at a strategy meeting in Miramar, including Humberto Sori Marin, Manuel Puig, and Regelio Gonzalez Corso.

March 22. In New York, an agreement is reached between members of U.S. - based anti-Castro groups the Frente Revolucionario Democrático and the Movimiento Revolucionario del Pueblo. Antonio Varona, Manuel Ray and others sign the agreement.

March 29. Cuban soldiers arrest C.I.A. agent Carlos Antonio Rodriguez Cabo, a.k.a. El Gallego. He is accused of various acts of terrorism.

April 8. Immigration and Naturalization agents in Miami arrest Rolando Masferrer Rojas. The arrest is requested by the U.S. State Department, which says that his presence in the U.S. (especially in Florida) is “prejudicial to the interests of the United States.”

April 9. In Miami, Rolando Masferrer is indicted for an aborted invasion of Cuba (October 4, 1960). The alleged attack violates the Neutrality Act that forbids the launching of any military expedition from U.S. territory against a nation with which the U.S. is not at war. The Kennedy Administration opposes pro-Batista exiles while encouraging other anti-Castro groups.

April 9. In Havana, a terrorist bomb explodes in the store El Encanto. Another bomb explodes near the Pepsi Cola factory.

April 9. In exile, the newly formed Cuban Revolutionary Council, headed by Dr. José Miro Cardona, issues a statement that asserts, “We are not, nor could we be, counterrevolutionaries. We were revolutionists who fought against the previous regime, which had impoverished the whole country for the benefit of a minority lust-

ing for gold and power. It is with the same convictions that we now oppose the present regime, which has betrayed our country and plunged it into chaos.” The statement is published in the New York Times.

April 11. Rolando Masferrer Rojas is formally charged with violating U.S. Neutrality Laws in an attempt to overthrow Cuba’s Fidel Castro. [Section 960 of Title 18 of the United States Code reads: “Whoever, within the United States, knowingly begins or sets on foot or provides or prepares a means for or furnishes the money for, or takes part in, any military or naval expedition or enterprise to be carried on from thence against the territory or dominion of any foreign prince or state, or of any colony, district, or people with who the United States is at peace, shall be fined not more than \$3,000 or imprisoned not more than three years, or both.”

April 13. Another explosion at the store El Encanto destroys the seven-story building.

April 15. Cuban airfields are bombed by “mystery planes” in order to destroy the Revolution’s air force. A total of eight B-26 bombers attack airfields at Ciudad Libertad (in Havana), San Antonio de los Banyos and Santiago de Cuba. The attacks wipe out 27 percent of Cuba’s fighter planes.

April 17. Cuban exiles, trained, armed and funded by the C.I.A, invade Cuba at Bay of Pigs (known in Cuba as Playa Girón). After three days of fighting the invading force is defeated by the Cuban army.

April 19. Castro formally declares that the revolution is “socialist.” In Havana, 10 counterrevolutionaries, including Humberto Sori Marin, Manuel Puig, and Regelio Gonzalez Corso are executed for treason.

May. A record low rainfall creates one of the most severe droughts in the island’s history.

May 1. In a speech, Castro refers to Cuba as a “socialist country.”

May 5. At a meeting in the U.S. of the National Security Council, it is formally agreed “U.S. policy toward Cuba should aim at the downfall of Castro.”

May 8. In a major speech, Castro disassociates himself from prevailing “Communist ideas.”

May 10. A resolution asking for an end to “the present drift towards American military intervention” in Cuba is published in the New York Times. The resolution is endorsed by seventy professors and writers (forty-one are members of the faculty at Harvard University). Among the signers are faculty members from Harvard, Boston University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Brandeis University: James Luther Adams, Lillian Hellman, David Owen, David Riesman, Noam Chomsky, Timothy Leary and others. The resolution also asks to “detach the Castro regime from the Communist bloc by working for a relaxation of diplomatic tensions and a resumption of trade relations,” and that we concentrate “constructive efforts on eliminating in other parts of Latin America the social conditions on which totalitarian nationalism feeds.”

September 23. Five Cubans and one American are executed by firing squad for “counterrevolutionary activities” during the Bay of Pigs invasion.

[*The unofficial* count of executions by firing squad since January 1959 stands at 622.]

November 3. At the White House, a program against the government of Fidel Castro is introduced by the name Operation Mongoose.

November 9. The U.S. Federal case against Rolando Masferrer Rojas is dismissed without explanation. He had been charged with violating U.S. neutrality laws by financing a twenty-seven-man invasion of Cuba.

November 30. U.S. President John F. Kennedy authorizes Operation Mongoose, which aims to eliminate Fidel Castro and the Cuban Revolution.

December 2. Castro declares himself a “Marxist-Leninist.”

1962

January 22. Under U.S. encouragement, the Organization of American States (O.A.S.) suspends Cuban membership.

February 4. Castro responds to Cuba's suspension from the O.A.S. with the Second Declaration of Havana, calling upon the people of Latin America to rise up against imperialism and declaring, "The duty of a revolutionary is to make the revolution."

February 7. President Kennedy broadens the partial trade restrictions imposed by Eisenhower to a ban on all trade with Cuba, except for non-subsidized sale of foods and medicines.

February 15. An assortment of U.S. naval vessels (including aircraft carriers) gathers about the Cuban coastline.

March. Food rationing begins.

March 21. From a U.S. National Intelligence Estimate on Cuba:

1) Forces available to the regime to suppress insurrection or repel invasion have been and are being greatly improved, with substantial Bloc assistance through provision of material and instruction;

2) Castro and the Revolution retain the positive support of at least a quarter of the population;

3) There is active resistance in Cuba, but it is limited, uncoordinated, unsupported, and desperate. The regime, with all the power of repression at its disposal, has shown that it can contain the present level of resistance activity;

4) The regime's apparatus for surveillance and repression should be able to cope with any popular tendency toward active resistance. Any impulse toward widespread revolt is inhibited by the fear that the apparatus inspires, and also by the lack of dynamic leadership and of any expectation of liberation within the foreseeable future.

March 23. President Kennedy expands the Cuban embargo to include imports of all goods made from or containing Cuban materials, even if made in other countries.

May 29. A high-level Soviet delegation that includes Marshal S. S. Biryuzov, commander of the Strategic Rocket Forces, and a high-level delegation, arrives secretly in Havana to suggest the deployment of nuclear weapons in Cuba.

July 2. Raul Castro, Minister of the Armed Forces, arrives in Moscow.

July 26. In Washington, a memo from Bob Hurwitch, Deputy Director of the Office of Caribbean and Mexican Affairs, asserts that: “State believes it needs a virtual civil war situation in Cuba before intervention in Cuba with U.S. military force might be considered politically feasible.” [Doc. No. 361, page 885, Foreign Relations of the United States, Cuba, 1961-1963, Volume X.]

Between January and August, 5,780 counterrevolutionary actions are reportedly carried out in Cuba. 716 involve sabotage of important economic objectives.

August 26. The U.S. Coast Guard impounds two boats in Marathon, Florida, after members of the Florida-based “Student Revolutionary Directorate” used them to fire automatic weapons at Havana beachfront buildings the night before. The twenty three members of the expedition are not arrested, and no charges are brought against them.

August 31. In Washington, a memo from General Lansdale (Chief of Operation Mongoose) outlines the objectives of Operation Mongoose, Phase II: a. Discredit and isolate the regime; b. Harass the economy; c. Intensify intelligence collection; d. split regime leadership and relations with Bloc; e. Assist Cuban exile groups and Latin American governments to take actions; f. Be prepared to exploit a revolt. [Document number 399, page 974, Foreign Relations of the United States, Cuba, 1961-1963, Volume X.]

September 3. U.S. senators George Smathers, Strom Thurmond and Kenneth B. Keating propose direct aggression against Cuba. They suggest sponsoring a N.A.T.O.-like military alliance that can deal with “the Cuban problem.”

September 8. Soviet freighter Omsk arrives in Cuba with the first shipment of MRBMs (medium range ballistic missiles).

September 15. Soviet freighter Poltava arrives in Cuba with the second shipment of MRBMs.

September 27. In Havana, five C.I.A. agents are arrested and large quantities of weapons are confiscated.

October 2. U.S. government cables all Latin American governments and N.A.T.O. countries new measures to tighten the economic embargo against Cuba.

October 12. In Washington, a memo from Edwin M. Martin (Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs) to U. Alexis Johnson (Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs) outlines a two-track course of covert action against Cuba. “Track one would consist of a heightened effort to move along the present Mongoose lines. The minimum objective there would be harassment: the maximum objective would be the triggering of a situation where there might be conflict at the top of the Cuban regime leading, hopefully, to its change or overthrow by some group within Cuba commanding arms.”

“Track two would consist of an effort to engage Cubans more deeply, both within Cuba and abroad, in efforts of their own liberation.” (Doc No. 14 - http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frusXI/01_25.html)

October 14. The Cuban Missile Crisis begins when U.S. reconnaissance aircraft photograph Soviet construction of intermediate-range missile sites in Cuba.

President Kennedy demands the withdrawal of Soviet missiles and imposes a naval blockade. Khrushchev agrees on condition that Cuba receives guarantee of non-aggression from the U.S. and Jupiter missiles aimed at the Soviet Union are removed from Turkey.

October 24. A naval quarantine of the island begins.

October 25. Soviet officials agree to remove the nuclear missiles from Cuba.

November 12. At a meeting in Washington, Desmond FitzGerald (C.I.A. Director of Plans) points out that the C.I.A. has three kinds of agent activities in Cuba: “1. Singleton, 2. Collection nets, and 3. Agents involved in “black net” operations. “While there is encouraging improvement in the geographical spread of these agents, there is still, understandably, a fairly heavy concentration of agents in the Havana area.” (Doc No. 376 - http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frusXI/376_390.html)

November 20. The naval quarantine that surrounded Cuba since October 24 is lifted. At a press conference, President Kennedy states that as long as Cuba commits no aggressive acts against any nation in the western hemisphere, it was never the intention of the United States to invade Cuba.

December 24. The U.S. exchanges \$53 million of medicines and baby food for 1,113 exiles captured in the “Bay of Pigs” invasion. A few prisoners remain until 1986.

December 29. In Miami, President Kennedy meets with survivors of the 2506 Brigade in a ceremony televised from the Orange Bowl. Pepe San Roman gives J.F.K. the brigade’s flag to hold for safekeeping, and Kennedy says “I can assure you that this flag will be returned to the brigade in a free Havana.” The book *American Spy* by E. Howard Hunt, reveals that the “flag was a replica,” and that the presentation almost didn’t take place because of the animosity by brigade members against J.F.K.

1963

January 25. New York attorney James Donovan meets with Fidel Castro to negotiate the release of 22 Americans imprisoned in Cuba.

February 8. The Kennedy administration prohibits travel to Cuba and makes financial and commercial transactions with Cuba illegal for U.S. citizens.

March 30. In Washington, the State and Justice Departments jointly announce they will take “every step necessary” to ensure that exile violence against Cuba does not emerge from “U.S. territory.”

April 3. In a meeting at the White House that includes Cyrus Vance, Richard Helms, McGeorge Bundy and additional staff from the State Department and the C.I.A., President Kennedy objects to exile groups holding press conferences after illegal aggressions against Cuba.

April 11. At a Cuba Coordinating Committee meeting in Washington, Desmond FitzGerald (Chief, Task Force W) presents three sabotage targets for the months of April and May: a railway bridge, a petroleum storage facility and a molasses storage vessel. It is concluded “this will meet the President’s desire for some noise level and for some action in the immediate future.”

April 22. Liza Howard of ABC News conducts a 5-hour interview with Fidel Castro. She later reports to the C.I.A. that “Castro is seeking rapprochement with the

U.S.” She adds that in her opinion Che Guevara, Raul Castro and Vilma Espín are opposed to any idea of rapprochement.

April 27. Castro begins a 5-week visit to the Soviet Union.

May 28. In a memo from Gordon Chase (National Security Council) to McGeorge Bundy (Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs) regarding “Cuban Exiles” in the Miami area, the following organizations are identified:

“Left. The Second National Front of Escambray, Alpha-66, the Anti-Communist Liberation Front, and elements of the People’s Revolutionary Movement and the 30th of November Movement have reached a working agreement. Although the working agreement is essentially action-oriented, the member organizations tend to the view that the original revolution promised by Castro should be reclaimed and redirected. The adherence of Manuel Ray’s Revolutionary Junta (JURE) would increase the influence of this grouping, which probably has the most potential appeal to Castro’s opponents within Cuba, but which is an object of concern to more conservative exiles.

“Center. Revolutionary Unity (UR), Revolutionary Recuperation Movement (MRP), Christian Democratic Movement (MDC), Revolutionary Student Directorate (DRE), and other less well-organized center groups, have held aloof from attempts at unity.

“Right. The Alliance for Cuban Liberty (ALC), and the Association for Economic Recovery of Cuba (AREC) have had difficulty attracting adherents. They principally look to the return of their lost property, rather than action and politics. Recent discussions by these groups with U.S. nationals promising large-scale financial support appear to have had no results.”

Further down the document states that “So far the efforts toward unity have been tentative and competitive. Political divisions, both ideological and personal, are deep and there appears to be little disposition or ability to effect a real accommodation of views. The groups on the left distrust those on the right and vice versa; the center groups are wary of both. Any formula for unity would have to be so diluted as to be almost meaningless. Moreover, the ability of a united exile organization to reflect, to any meaningful degree, the attitudes and aspirations of those within Cuba would be minimal.” (Doc. No. 345, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frusXI/326_350.html)

June 19. President Kennedy approves a C.I.A. program titled: “Proposed Covert Policy and Integrated Program of Action toward Cuba,” presented to the Standing Group on June 8. The plan renews support for exile attacks on selected Cuban targets that include transportation facilities, power plants, fuel production and storage operations.

July 9. All Cuban-owned assets in the United States are frozen.

October. In Prologue to the Cuban Revolution, Robin Blackburn writes: “The Cuban Revolution is now widely recognized as an event of world-historical importance. For the first time there has been a socialist revolution in the Americas... The universal significance of the Cuban Revolution makes it one of the decisive phenomena of our time.”

November 14. Four Cubans are executed in Havana’s Cabanya Fortress. Argimiro Fonseca Fernández, Wilfredo Alfonso Ibáñez, Israel Rodríguez Lima and Erasmo Machín Garia had been charged with infiltrating Cuba to find “spots along the island’s beaches where arms could be landed.”

November 17. President Kennedy asks French journalist Jean Daniel to tell Castro that he is now ready to negotiate normal relations and drop the embargo. According to former Press Secretary Pierre Salinger, “If Kennedy had lived I am confident that he would have negotiated that agreement and dropped the embargo because he was upset with the way the Soviet Union was playing a strong role in Cuba and Latin America...”

November 22. U.S. President John F. Kennedy is assassinated.

November 29. Composer Ernesto Lecuona dies in Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Spain.

December 2. Cuba announces the formation of the United Party of Socialist Revolution, which unites representatives from various groups, including the Popular Socialist Party (the former Communist party).

Cuba becomes the first nation in the Western Hemisphere to jam American radio broadcasts.

1964

January 7. Castro tells American journalist Herbert L. Matthews that Cubans had put forward the idea of Soviet missiles on the island.

February 12. Castro sends a verbal message to President Lyndon B. Johnson through Lisa Howard of ABC News.

June. Castro's sister, Juanita Castro, defects, and becomes a prominent radio commentator in Miami. (In 2001 President G.W. Bush appoints her director of Radio-T.V. Martí.)

July 6. In a New York Times interview with reporter Richard Eder, Castro makes a peaceful offer to the U.S. that includes ending material aid to Latin American revolutionaries and the release of political prisoners in Cuba. The Department of State immediately issues a sharp rejection; Cuba must first end its dependency on the Soviets, and cease to support revolutionary groups in Latin America.

In The Closest of Enemies, author Wayne Smith writes:

“I was bothered by the hardness of our demands. How could Castro break ties with the Soviet Union before reaching an accommodation with us? How could he renounce Soviet military assistance when he still faced a hostile United States? How could he renounce Moscow's economic aid without being certain of finding another benefactor? Obviously, he couldn't. Clearly, we did not wish to talk to Castro. Our hard reply was simply a way of saying no without appearing to do so.” Pg. 88.

July 26. The Organization of American States (O.A.S.) adopts mandatory sanctions against Cuba, requiring all members to sever diplomatic and trade relations. Only Mexico refuses to comply.

July 26. In a speech given in Santiago de Cuba, Castro reiterates the peaceful overtures made to the U.S. in the July 6 interview in the New York Times.

October 14. Khrushchev is ousted as First Secretary and Premier of the Soviet Union.

December 12. Cuban exiles fire a bazooka at U.N. headquarters in New York during a speech by Che Guevara to the General Assembly.

1965

February 18. Cuba and the Soviet Union sign a five-year agreement that reschedules payment of Cuban debt (about \$500 million).

February 26. In Algiers, Che Guevara speaks about the mistakes of the revolution.

April 1. Che Guevara resigns his Cuban citizenship and leaves to wage armed struggle in Latin America.

May 1. Che writes a farewell letter to Fidel Castro.

October 3. The new Communist Party of Cuba is inaugurated.

October 10. Hundreds of Cubans begin to leave the island from Camarioca (a small fishing port). The port is opened to foreign boats, and within two months about 7,500 refugees have arrived in the U.S.

December 1. The Cuban airlift begins. In its first year, the airlift brings more than 45,000 refugees – only about 5% require federal assistance, and only for a short time.

December. The United Nations General Assembly adopts a “Declaration of the Inadmissibility of Intervention in the Domestic Affairs of States and the Protection of their Independence and Sovereignty.” It says “no state shall organize, assist, foment, finance, incite or tolerate subversive, terrorist or armed activities directed toward the violent overthrow of another state, or interfere in civil strife in another state.”

1966

January 3-15. Cuba hosts the first Tricontinental Conference, from which are founded the Organization for Solidarity with the Peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America (OSPAAL) and the Organization for Latin American Solidarity (LASO).

February 13. Cuba announces a new trade agreement with the Soviet Union that includes credits for \$91 million.

November 2. U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson signs into law the Cuban Adjustment Act, which exempts Cuban immigrants from general U.S. migration laws. Any Cuban who has reached U.S. territory since January 1, 1959 is eligible for permanent residency after two years. 123,000 Cubans immediately apply for permanent status.

December 29. U.S. Air Force pilot Everett Jackson is shot down over Cuba and captured after dropping arms and equipment intended for counterrevolutionaries in Las Villas province.

1967

January 2. Rolando Masferrer Rojas and sixty-seven others are arrested in Marathon, Florida, for an alleged plot to invade Haiti and then Cuba. Among the weapons seized by U.S. federal agents are machine guns, handguns and knives.

January 2. In the article “Cuba: Eight Years of Revolution,” Herbert Matthews writes in the New York Times: “There have been improvements in child care, public health, housing, roads and the typical leveling down of the whole social and economic structure that accompanies revolutionary ‘equality.’ This also means, however, that the poorest and most backward elements, especially in the rural areas, have been ‘leveled up.’ Cuban Negroes, for the first time, have equal status with whites, economically and socially.”

August 1. The first meeting of the Latin American Solidarity Organization (LASO) opens in Havana.

October 9. Che Guevara is killed in Bolivia by U.S.-trained rangers in the village of Vallegrande.

1968

January 2. The Cuban government announces petroleum rationing due to a cutback in deliveries from the Soviet Union.

January 11. Two British journalists are arrested and then expelled after photographing military sites in Havana. They are identified as Peter Davis and Joy Searl.

January 13. Castro offers to trade 100 political prisoners for the remains of Che Guevara (currently in Bolivia).

January 18. In Havana, an American pilot is captured when his small plane is shot down after dropping a cargo of weapons for counterrevolutionaries. The pilot is identified as Everett Jackson, age 27.

January 21. A bomb explodes on a B-25 plane at Miami International Airport. The departure is delayed, as the explosion damages only a wing. The plane was to carry medicines to Cuba.

January 22. Dr. Eliodoro Martinez Jonco replaces Dr. José Ramon Machado Ventura as Cuba's Health Minister.

January 23. Raul Castro (Minister of the Armed Forces and Second Secretary to the Cuban Communist Party, convenes a meeting of the party's Central Committee to hold a trial of thirty-seven members (including Anibal Escalante) for "microfactionalist activities" which include "encouraging the Soviet Union to apply economic sanctions against Cuba." The charges amount to treason. It is asserted that had the microfaction succeeded, "it would have subordinated Cuban sovereignty" to the Soviets.

January 25. In Miami, two businesses who regularly ship packages to Cuba are bombed before dawn. The anti-Castro group "El Poder Cubano" (Cuban Power), takes credit for the bombings, and claims that "Servicios Especializados" and "All Cargo Transport, Inc." were "doing business with Cuba."

January 28. Anibal Escalante and eight others are expelled from the Communist Party as a result of their "microfactionalist activities."

February 3. Eastern Airlines Flight 7 from Newark to Miami (with 193 passengers) is hijacked to Havana. The plane carries 193 passengers, and marks the fifth hijacking for Eastern Airlines this year.

March 13. Castro launches the “revolutionary offensive” which nationalizes 55,000 small businesses and leads to state control of nearly all trades and services.

March 23. A new economic agreement with the Soviet Union reveals a 13% decrease from the previous year.

June 5. U.S. Senator Robert F. Kennedy is shot in Los Angeles, California. He dies the next day.

August 23. Castro endorses the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.

September 16. Orlando Bosch and others fire a bazooka at a Polish freighter docked in the port of Miami. Bosch goes to jail for the act, and is paroled in 1972.

1969

January 2. The Cuban government announces sugar rationing.

February 16. Eastern Airlines Flight 1 from Newark to Miami is hijacked to Cuba. The plane lands in Havana.

July 26. Castro announces the start of a campaign to produce ten million tons of sugar in the next harvest.

August 25. TWA Flight 134 from Las Vegas to Philadelphia is hijacked to Cuba. The Boeing 727, with eighty passengers and a six-person crew, lands in Havana’s José Martí Airport at 10:21 p.m.

December. The first contingent of the Venceremos Brigade, a group of volunteer workers from the U.S., arrives in Cuba to work on the sugar harvest.

A report of the Cuban Academy of Sciences asserts that the Cuban family is in a state of crisis.

1970

May 19. Castro announces that Cuba missed its goal to produce 10 million

tons of sugar by 15% (managing 8.5 million tons, the largest harvest in Cuban history).

August. The “Brigades of Militant Mothers for Education” is founded. Its goal is, in part, to encourage women to enter the labor force.

September 25. The U.S. warns the Soviet Union to discontinue construction of a nuclear submarine base in Cienfuegos. By this time, more than 85 percent of Cuban trade is with the U.S.S.R. and allies. The U.S. embargo is foiled.

1971

March 20. Poet Herberto Padilla is arrested and detained for thirty-nine days.

April 17. In Miami, a few hundred Cuban exiles gather to dedicate a monument to the ten-year anniversary of the Bay of Pigs invasion.

September 12. In Puerto Rico, on the eightieth anniversary of Albizu Campos’ birth, 80,000 people march through San Juan demanding independence. This is the largest demonstration in the island’s history.

November 10. Castro arrives in Chile for a three-week visit, his first to a Latin American country since 1959.

November 18. In a question and answer period with students at the University of Concepción, Chile, Castro tells how he became a communist.

November 28. In Chile, Castro talks about Che Guevara.

October 2. Bola de Nieve dies in Mexico.

1972

The Center for Cuban Studies is established in New York to promote cultural and academic exchange.

May 3. Castro begins a sixty-three-day tour of Africa, Eastern Europe, and the Soviet Union.

July 11. Cuba joins the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON), the Soviet trading bloc based on coordinated central planning and barter exchange.

August 28. At the United Nations, Cuba requests that in light of adopted resolution 1541 (12/14/60) that the U.N. declare that Puerto Rico has a right to self-determination.

November 19. Cuba accepts a U.S. proposal to begin formal negotiations over the problem of airline hijackings.

1973

February 15. Cuba and the U.S. sign an antihijacking agreement.

April 6. Eastern Airlines flight 8894 lands at Miami International Airport at 11:55 A.M. with the last eighty-four passengers of the Cuban airlift. Since 1965, 3,049 flights had brought 260,561 Cubans to the U.S., making this the largest airborne refugee operation in American history.

November 15. The 13th Congress of the Cuban Labor Confederation ties wages to productivity in an effort to improve efficiency.

The Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR) celebrates its 13th year. According to Cuba's official newspaper Granma, the total membership is now about 4,750,000.

1974

January 28. Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev arrives in Cuba for a weeklong visit.

September 11. OMEGA 7, an anti-Castro paramilitary group is founded in the U.S.

September 28. U.S. Senators Claiborne Pell (D-Rhode Island) and Jacob Javits

(R-New York) visit Cuba. They are the first U.S. elected officials to visit the island since the break of diplomatic relations.

November. Assistant Secretary of State William Rogers and Assistant to the Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger conduct secret normalization talks with Cuban officials in Washington and New York. The talks end over Cuban involvement in Angola.

December. In a speech, Castro admits “after more than 15 years of Revolution, women’s rights are an area in which we are still politically and culturally behind.”

1975

February 9. In a T.V. interview from Mexico City, U.S. Senator Edward M. Kennedy urges the U.S. government to lift the embargo and normalize relations with Cuba. “I believe the idea of isolating Cuba was a mistake,” says Kennedy. “It has been ineffective. Whatever the reasons and justifications may have been at the time, now they are invalid.”

February 21. Cuban exile leader Luciano Nieves is assassinated after coming out in support for dialogue with Cuba.

March 1. Maurice A. Ferré, Mayor of Miami, asks Attorney General Edward H. Levi for federal help to combat “violence in the Cuban exile community that the police regard as politically motivated. Mayor Ferré sites the assassination of Luciano Nieves, and the bombings of T.V. station WKID in Dania, among other incidents. Mayor Ferré estimates that the actual terrorists number less than two dozen.

April. A government survey seeks to discover why so few women ran in the 1974 People’s Power elections and why so few were elected.

July 28. The Organization of American States (O.A.S.) votes to end political and economic sanctions against Cuba. This opens the way for each member nation to decide whether to have diplomatic and trade relations with Cuba, which many had already established.

August 21. The U.S. announces that it will allow foreign subsidiaries of U.S.

companies to sell products in Cuba, and that it will no longer penalize other nations for trade with Cuba.

October 31. In Miami, a bomb planted in his car kills Rolando Masferrer Rojas.

November 5. At the request of the newly inaugurated Angolan government, Cuba sends a large contingent of troops to help the Angolans repel an invasion by South African forces launched on October 23.

November 20. The U.S. Senate Select Intelligence Committee releases its 347 page interim report on C.I.A. assassination plots against foreign leaders. The report identifies over eight attempted plots to kill Castro between 1960 and 1965, as well as additional plans against other Cuban leaders.

December 14. An article runs in the New York Times titled “Sentiment Against Cubans Is Found Growing in Miami Over the Terrorism Linked to Anti-Castro Exiles.” In the article, author George Volsky writes, “A strong and growing anti-Cuban sentiment has become evident here in recent weeks, principally a result of a wave of terrorism attributed by law enforcement agencies to anti-Castro exiles.” The article adds that in the last 10 days 9 powerful bombs have exploded, and that 100 bombs have exploded in the past 18 months, but there have been no arrests.

December 17-22. The First Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba is held in Havana. It adopts party statutes, a programmatic platform, and approves the draft of the constitution.

December 20. President Ford announces that Cuban involvement in Angola prevents the possibility of restoring full diplomatic relations in the near future. The 1988 Cuban/Angolan victory at Cuito Canavale would mark the turning point in the frontline states’ war against the apartheid regime.

1976

A new constitution is ratified making Cuba a communist state. Among the changes is the establishment of new administrative division of the island. Instead of the six provinces left over from Spanish rule (Pinar del Río, La Habana, Matanzas, Las Villas, Camagüey, Oriente) the island is divided into fourteen provinces: Pinar del Rio, La

Habana, City of La Habana, Matanzas, Cienfuegos, Villa Clara, Santi Spiritus, Ciego de Avila, Camagüey, Las Tunas, Granma, Holguín, Santiago de Cuba, and Guan-támo.

February 24. The Family Code is adopted. It seeks to preserve and strengthen families, promote social changes and increase the participation of women in Cuban society.

April 5. U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger states that there is no possibility of U.S. relations with Cuba while Cuba has troops in Africa. Cuban troops in Angola would go on to play a decisive role in defeating the South African army and hastening apartheids demise.

October 6. Cuban airliner crashes after an explosion nine minutes out of Barbados, killing 73 people, most of them teenagers. Luis Posada Carrilles, an anti-Castro activist trained by the C.I.A., is charged with the bombing. In 1998, Carrilles admits to (and later denies) over a decade of anti-Castro terrorist activities funded by the Cuban-American National Foundation (C.A.N.F.), a Miami-based non-profit organization and the most powerful lobby in Washington.

October 15. At a mass funeral for the victims of the October 6 bombing, Castro blames the sabotage on the C.I.A.

October. Orlando Bosch is arrested in Venezuela in connection with downing of the Cuban airliner that killed seventy-three people.

December 3. Fidel Castro is elected president of the State Council, which, under the new constitution, consolidates the previous positions of president and prime minister. The new president serves as head of state, head of government, and commander in chief of the Armed Forces.

1977

March 19. U.S. President Carter drops the ban on travel to Cuba and on U.S. citizens spending dollars in Cuba. Legendary jazz trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie travels to Havana and meets his soon to be protégé, Arturo Sandoval.

April 27. The U.S. and Cuba sign a maritime boundary and fishing rights accord.

May 25. The U.S. State Department warns that Cuba's recent deployment of military advisors in Ethiopia could "impede the improvement of U.S.-Cuban relations."

September. The U.S. and Cuba open interests sections in each other's capitals.

November 5. Somalia expels all Soviet advisors and breaks diplomatic relations with Cuba, citing the presence of Cuban and Soviet advisors in Ethiopia.

Mid-December. Cuban combat troops begin to arrive in Ethiopia (eventually totaling nearly 20,000).

1978

January. At the request of the Ethiopian government, thousands of Cuban troops, supported and led by Soviet, East German and Cuban officers, help repel a Somali invasion of Ethiopia.

February 27. U.S. Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, states that he does not foresee the normalization of relations with Cuba due to the presence of Cuban troops in Africa.

July 31. Castro calls for the removal of U.S. military bases from Guantanamo Bay. Bombings of the Cuban United Nations Mission, the Cuban Interests Section, and the Soviet Mission by anti-Castro exile groups follow throughout the fall.

September 9. In New York, Cuban exiles bomb the Cuban Mission to the United Nations.

December. U.S. government announces that the full force of the law will be used against those responsible for the July terrorist actions. No one is ever arrested or brought to justice.

1979

January 1. Cuban-Americans are permitted to visit their families in Cuba. More than 100,000 visit in the coming year.

June 19. In the U.S., Rep. Ted Weiss (D-NY) introduces unsuccessful legislation to end the U.S. trade blockade against Cuba and re-establish diplomatic relations.

July. Cuba develops close relations with the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. (Since 1977, Cuba supported the Sandanista insurgency against Anastasio Somoza's rule.)

September 3-9. At a meeting of the sixth summit of the Nonaligned Movement in Havana, Castro is elected chair of the movement and serves until 1982.

November 1. A new penal code takes effect, replacing the criminal code passed in 1936.

November 6. The first contingent of Cuban teachers leaves for Nicaragua.

3. 13 La Historia Me Absolverá Redux

All of us were creeping out of our cages and beginning to struggle in the jungle. That's what it was. We were stiff coming out of our cages, sluggish and fearful. We had no idea what it was like to fight for our lives. But we had to try. We had been locked up in a zoo for thirty-five years. We had been given a little food and medicine, but we had no idea what it was like out there beyond the bars. And all of a sudden came the switch to the jungle. Our brains were sleepy and our muscles soft and weak. Only the fittest could hope to survive. I was trying, hard. Very hard.

– *Pedro Juan Gutierrez* –

At the beginning of the month of June, 2000, a French magazine published a summary of the notes taken by Mr. Federico Mayor Zaragoza, former Director General of UNESCO, during a conversation with Fidel Castro on January 28, 2000, while he visited Cuba to take part in the II International Economists Workshop held in Havana from the 24th to the 28th of that month.

Pedro Juan Gutierrez is a novelist and newspaper reporter. In the 1980s, he was a prize winning investigative journalist who traveled abroad frequently. In 1989, he published his first book, 'Living In Space: From Dream To Reality', a report on the Soviet Space Program and its prospects in 1985. Ten years later, he was marooned in the squalor of centro Habana, Havana's most dilapidated and desperately poor neighborhood, and began writing a series of shocking vignettes about the decay engulfing the city. The stories were brought together to form the Havana Cycle, better known as the Dirty Havana Trilogy, and was first published in 1998 in Spain after being turned down by Cuban printing houses.

I have brought the Fidel Castro interview together while sampling Dirty Havana Trilogy to bring into relief the chasm between the high priest of the Revolution and the common people down below. I conduct this exercise not to mock Fidel Castro or discredit the genuine gains of the Cuban Revolution but to juxtapose its lofty ideals and official pronouncements with the sheer madness of the 1990s as the country descended into pure hell. I saw it with my own eyes and I have no doubt that Fidel Castro was fully aware of what was occurring.

The interview with Fidel Castro begins

FEDERICO MAYOR

– With China, Vietnam and North Korea, Cuba is considered the last bulwark of socialism. Yet, ten years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, does the word “Socialism” make sense anymore?

FIDEL CASTRO

– In Cuba, we have a united country and a Party that guides but does not nominate or elect. The people, gathered in open assemblies, put up candidates, nominate and

elect delegates from 14,686 districts; these are the foundation of our electoral system. They make up the assemblies of their respective municipalities, and nominate candidates to the provincial and national assemblies, the highest bodies of state power at those levels. The delegates, who are chosen through a secret ballot, must receive over 50% of the valid notes in their corresponding jurisdictions.

PEDRO JUAN GUTIERREZ

– Hortensia had always been a policewoman. She was captain of the State Security Unit. She retired years ago. She had recently been widowed, and now she lived in fear.

– Since her husband died, she was a filthy mess. She didn't have money, or food, or water, or soap. Her family couldn't stand her. She lived alone and she was half-crazy. She always used to think everyone was plotting against her. Even squashed flatter than a cockroach, she was still a bossy and dictatorial as ever, which is why even her daughter avoided her. Once, when I was Hortensia's neighbor, her daughter said to me, "I can't stand her, let me know when she does." I thought she was a real b***. But then later I didn't. Later I understood.

"Since you left, there's no living on this roof. It's a nightmare."

"Why do you say that, Hortensia? You've got to find the strength to go on. It doesn't matter whether Lucíos dead or not."

"Oh, child, it does. He was all I had. And look at the way I argued with him and how I wanted a divorce. Now everyone has turned their backs on me."

"No, no. Don't say that. You'll always have God." (I say that to get her goat. She doesn't even believe in her own mother.)

"God is a crock! I never have any money. A person can't get by without dollars in this country. The hell with counting on God to help! Come in, sit down, let's talk awhile."

"No, Hortensia, no. I have to go. I'm trying to sell this bucket."

"The moneybags next door will buy it from you."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes. They're filthy rich. He works in a dollar store and he robs the place blind. The son of a b***. Stealing from the government and Fidel!"

"Never mind that, Hortensia. Forget about politics for a while. Try to enjoy the years you have left as best you can."

"Oh, child, I'm near the end. And look what the Revolution has become."

"Yes, the Chinese say life goes in cycles. You always end up back at the beginning."

"I can't understand you. What are you talking about?"

"Nothing, don't be sad. Call those people for me and see if they want the bucket."

And they did. They bought the bucket from me. And then I left. I wasn't in the mood for Hortensiás tirades. When I was at the door, she said, "The people can't be neglected this way. This building is falling to pieces, there's never any water, or gas, or food. Nothing, child, nothing. What is this? How long will it last? The government has to take care of us. Aren't you a journalist? Why don't you write something about this building? See if you can reach someone, touch their hearts... There are lots of us old people here and we're being ignored, because..."

"Hortensia, haven't you noticed me selling buckets? I'm not even a street sweeper anymore. One of these days I'll come by when I have more time and we'll talk. I'll see you later."

I went down the stairs. The elevator had been broken for years. Twelve floors down. On the second floor it occurred to me to knock on Flaviás door. We once had a lovely two-year affair. We made a pact to live together and love each other forever, she with her sculptures and me with my novels. In those days, she called me daddy and she was very longing and she'd say, "I really need you, daddy. But she went away to Spain, and then to New York. She took perfectly good care of herself, and she forgot our pact. She didn't need daddy anymore. Then she came back. We saw each other for an hour. It was a sad day for me when we said our good-byes. A happy day for her. Lots of time had gone by since then. She'd traveled to New York again. She'd had solo shows, been toasted with California wine, and sold her drawings for a thousand dollars each. She was showing me the photos now. And she pointed out the gallery owner and a little fag who helped her hang the show, and her cousin and the neighbors, who were there too. She, she seemed much more relaxed. After all, she had dollars, and dollars are a good sedative. She made me coffee, and she said, "Oh, it's such a struggle to be famous in New York. It's better to make money and have fun, don't you think?"

"I don't know. I've never gone looking for fame in New York."

"Oh, don't be that way, Are you still bitter?"

"I was never bitter. I just got very sad."

"Well, let's not talk about that anymore."

"All right. I just came by to say hello and see how things were going."

"Don't lose any more weight. You've gotten very skinny. Why is that?"

"I'm taking ballet classes."

"Oh, you're a pain."

“Well, see you.”

FIDEL CASTRO

— The United States, such a vocal advocate of multi-party systems, has two parties that are so perfectly similar in their methods, objectives and goals that they have practically created the most perfect one-party system in the world. Over 50% of the people in that "democratic country" do not even cast a vote, and the team that manages to raise the most funds often wins with the votes of only 25% of the electorate. The political system is undermined by disputes, vanity and personal ambition or by interests groups operating within the established economic and social model and there is no alternative for a change in the system.

PEDRO JUAN GUTIERREZ

— They built flimsy rafts out of tires, board, and ropes, and they set out to sea as merrily as if they were on their way to a picnic. That was the summer of 1994. For four years, people had been starving and going mad in my country, but Havana suffered most. As a friend of mine always said, “Pedro Juan, the only way to live here is crazy, drunk, or fast asleep”. The sanest people came up and tried to reason with the raft people. And they replied, “All I want is out of this s***. A person lives the good life over there, that’s all I know.”

FIDEL CASTRO

— The developed capitalist system, which later gave rise to modern imperialism, has finally imposed a neoliberal and globalized order that is simply unsustainable. It has created a world of speculation where fictitious wealth and stocks have been created that has nothing to do with actual production.

PEDRO JUAN GUTIERREZ

— I went to see Joseito, a taxi driver who lost his job in the crisis and now was gambling for a living. He’d been supporting himself gambling for two years. In Mantilla, there were lots of illegal little gambling clubs. The police made a sweep sometimes and wiped out two or three, locked everybody up for a few days, and then let them go. I had three hundred pesos in my pocket, and Joseito convinced me to play. He was carrying ten thousand himself. He was in it for the big money. We went to one of his lucky houses. And he was lucky. I lost all my money in fifteen minutes. I don’t know why

the hell I let Joseito drag me along. I never win anything when I gamble, but he was ranking it in from the start. By the time I left, he had already pocketed five thousand pesos. Lucky bastard. With his kind of luck, I'd be riding high. Well, he has a good life in Mantilla, and he always says, "Oh, Pedro Juan, if I'd had any idea, I would've gotten rid of that f*** taxi a long time ago."

FEDERICO MAYOR

– Forty-one years after the Revolution, and despite all of the difficulties it has had to confront, the regime that you established has endured. What could be the reason for this longevity?

FIDEL CASTRO

– The tireless struggle and work alongside the people and for the people. The fact that we have settled for convictions and acted accordingly that we believe in humankind and in being our country's slaves and not its masters. We believe in building upon solid principles, in seeking out and producing solutions, even in apparently impossible and unreal conditions in preserving the honesty of those with the highest political and administrative responsibilities, that is, in transforming politics into a priesthood. This could be a partial answer to your question, setting aside many other elements particularly related to our country and this historical era.

PEDRO JUAN GUTIERREZ

– I had come to some conclusions. Ha ha. "Some conclusions." Ridiculous! Is anyone in the world really qualified to claim that? Well, what I mean is, I finally understood a truth as old as man himself, but I had to keep relearning it: the guiding principle of the poor is to love and admire whoever has money and tosses them a crumb. The guiding principle of the slave is to love and admire the master. It's as simple as that. The poor man, or slave, it makes no difference what you call him, can't afford to have a complex ethical code or demand much from his pride, since he's always in danger of starving to death. "If the master gives me a little, that's enough, and I love him"; that's all. Women generally understand that and accept it from a very young age. But we men make things a little more complicated, wanting to rebel, take stands, and all that. In the end, we come to understand it too, just a little bit later.

FIDEL CASTRO

– There were times when we were swimming in a sea of circulating money. Our national currency experienced an extraordinary devaluation, and the budget deficit reached 35% of our gross domestic product. I could see intelligent visitors almost faint from shock. Our peso, the national currency, dropped to a value of 150 to the dollar in 1994. In spite of this, we did not close down a single health care center, a single school or daycare center, a single university, or a single sports facility. Nobody was fired and left on his own without employment or social security, even when fuel and raw materials were most scarce. There was not even a trace of the customary and hideous shock policies so highly.

PEDRO JUAN GUTIERREZ

“Pedrojoan fell off a bus and they took him to the hospital!”

– I had to get hold of myself. I almost passed out. They told me which hospital he had been taken to, and I shot off like an arrow. It was the worst hospital in Havana, the dirtiest and most godforsaken of them all. The boy and a teacher had already been there for two hours, and no one had attended to them. His wrist was broken. He had been hanging out the door of a crowded bus, when he started to lose his grip. He knew he was going to fall and might easily be killed. To the man next to him, he said, “Please, hold onto me. I’m falling.”

– But the asshole said, “So fall, what do I care?”

– And then Pedrojoan was head over heels in the street, the bus still going forty miles an hour. It was a miracle he wasn’t killed. Well, I got moving. I found two doctors, and I asked them to please treat my son.

FIDEL CASTRO

– We have opened up the economy to the extent that it has been possible and necessary. We have not gone for the same insanity and follies as in other places, where the recommendations of European and American experts have been followed as if they were Biblical prophets. We have not been driven by the insanity of privatization, and much less by that of confiscating state property to take it over ourselves or hand it out

as gifts to relatives or friends. This happened, as we all know, in both former socialist countries and in others that never were socialists, under the pious, tolerant, and complicit cover of the neoliberal philosophy that has become a universal pandemic. The West is well aware of where the money is deposited and what has happened to the embezzled or stolen funds, but nobody has said a word about it.

PEDRO JUAN GUTIERREZ

– San Rafael Boulevard was already bustling. The police were there, keeping an eye on the street vendors. But despite the police, the vendors slip past you, whispering their calls, “pizza”, “hamburgers”, “cold drinks”, “dollars at fifty pesos, come on I’ve only got two left,” “coconut and peanut bars, coconut and peanut bars.” And on and on, selling everything. It had been thirty-five years since vendors were heard in full cry in Cuba. Now they were starting up again, but fearfully, whispering in the customer’s ears, sometimes so softly and rapidly they couldn’t be understood. Once in a while a policeman would “confiscate” a bag full of pizzas or hamburgers and take all the vendor’s money for good measure. The guy would hand everything over, terrified, because otherwise he’d be slapped with fines, a trial, and a criminal record. It’s the police who have most in common with criminals. The meeting of extremes.

FEDERICO MAYOR

– *The demise of the U.S.S.R. suddenly deprived Cuba of precious aid. In your opinion, what was the United States purpose in maintaining the embargo despite the end of the East-West confrontation? Did they hope to influence your form of government?*

FIDEL CASTRO

– They were not trying to influence the Revolution but to destroy it. Just as the Senate in ancient Rome proclaimed the destruction of Carthage in the times of Hannibal, the U.S. administrations’ obsessively pursued motto has been: Cuba must be destroyed.

PEDRO JUAN GUTIERREZ

– I was buying food outside the city and bringing it back and selling it in Havana. Anything would sell, from heads of garlic to lemons, even ox meat, whatever could be found. I came to a farmer’s house and the guy had a dead horse on the patio.

Its belly was already half-swollen. The farmer could barely hold the men off, a crowd with machetes, knives, and sacks. They wanted to cut the animal up and take it away in pieces. They were like a pack of dogs. I counted them: eight skinny, starving, dirty, wild-eyed black men, dressed in rags. The farmer explained that the animal was sick when it died and that it was rotting quickly. They weren't arguing. All they were asking was to be allowed to take a piece of it, and they would bury the head and the hooves themselves, and whatever else was left of the mangy, skeletal beast, covered in green flies. Worms and pus oozed from its rear end.

"Why don't you just let them eat it and to hell with it?" I asked.

"No. I'm waiting for the police to come. If they don't confirm that it died sick, then I'll be taken to court".

"And after that?"

"After that they can eat it. What do I care?"

FEDERICO MAYOR

— But, this does not mean that the continuation of the embargo is another test that the Cuban people can easily overcome.

FIDEL CASTRO

—The blockade, of course, is a painful burden for each and every Cuban. The Third World nations, as well as most of the U.N. member countries, have repeatedly demanded the lifting of the blockade. But the U.S. Congress, with the cooperation of many members of the Republican majority, headed up in this case by Mr. Helms and Mr. Burton, and even with the support of several Democratic Party members, such as Mr. Torricelli and others, has opposed the lifting of this blockade, which is by far the longest lasting in history.

PEDRO JUAN GUTIERREZ

—Extreme poverty was wreaking havoc. This just kept getting worse, and everyone was trying to get out however they could, go somewhere else. It was a stampede. Carlitos, born and raised in the midst of chaos, called his mother and brother every day, crying. He was miserable in Miami, and he couldn't sleep. He wasn't enjoying his American Dream. He was spending a fortune on phone calls and he wasn't concentrating his interests or energy on anything concrete. He couldn't. Inside of him was the desperation of chaos. His heart still beat behind bars.

FIDEL CASTRO

– It is significant that the European Union shows much less “concern” about other countries, doubtlessly because they are of a greater economic interest than we ever could. In any case, all conditioning becomes unacceptable when the inalienable principles of our homeland are involved. The political organization adopted by a sovereign nation cannot be subjected to conditions. Cuba will neither negotiate nor sell out its Revolution, which has cost the blood and the sacrifice of many of its sons and daughters.

PEDRO JUAN GUTIERREZ

– Three weeks passed, and nothing strange happened. The last night was the most complicated. In the early hours of the morning, we tried to pick up a dirty old man. He was stretched out asleep on the doorstep of a hospital. When I moved him so two of us could lift him and carry him to the truck, we saw he was lying in a puddle of blood. He vomited up some black blood; at the same time he clutched a sack of mangoes. The sack was heavy, but he dragged it with him, vomiting black blood on the mangoes. It was foul-smelling blood. The old man was all rippled up inside. We dropped him back down on the ground.

FIDEL CASTRO

– On the other hand, it all depends on what is meant by “democracy clause”. How many so-called “democratic” states are up to their necks in debt? How many of them allow up to 30% of the population to live in conditions of extreme poverty? Why should countries with tens of thousands of children wandering the streets and countless numbers of illiterate people be treated better than we are? We do not see why this should be so. Cuba will never accept political conditions from the European Union, and much less from the United States. This should be definitely understood.

PEDRO JUAN GUTIERREZ

– I stuck out my hand and started to ask everyone who passed by for money, muttering something indecipherable. When you’re begging, you can’t speak clearly, or try to make sense, or anything like that. You’re pathetic vermin, a germ begging for a few coins for the love of God. Scum of the Earth. That’s the way it’s always been done, since the beginning of time. Begging is an art, and you have to be good to fake being

a moron, a raving idiot, a hopeless drunk, a brainless lump. Only an idiot can beg. If you're a little bit smarter, you've got to do something else. That's the way it goes. To be convincing. You've got to look like a moron. But even that didn't work. No one gave me anything! I walked a long way down Carlos III, slowly, raggedly, aimlessly. Staring like a moron or an idiot, shoving my upturned palm in people's faces and babbling gibberish. No one gave me even a penny! Terrible! Nothing. I could have starved to death that night. I walked the full length of Carlos III. Two or three hours I was walking. I don't know how long it was. Begging, for the looking through me as if I were a ghost. I had never begged before. It's terrible to beg when everyone is so poor. They're all scraping bottom themselves, and they hate anyone who comes complaining to them. Lots of people would say, "You must be kidding, man. I should be the one begging."

FEDERICO MAYOR

— Since the days of McCarthyism, Washington has tended to consider that the only regimes that are harmful and must be eliminated are the communist regimes. But the White House has tolerated, without blinking, the likes of Somoza, Trujillo, Duvalier and others. What are your thoughts on this "double-standard" approach?

FIDEL CASTRO

— It would be better not to delve into the hypocrisy and indecency of that policy. It would take many hours and lengthy historical references. The market will dry up some day for the industry of lies; it is drying up already. If you really delve into the truth, you will realize that the political conception of imperialism, as well as the neoliberal economic order and globalization process imposed on the world, is orphaned and defenseless when it comes to ideas and ethics. It is in this field that the main struggle of our times will be decided. And the final result of this battle, with no possible alternative, will be on the side of truth, and thus on the side of humanity.

PEDRO JUAN GUTIERREZ

The Chicano and I drank a lot of beers sitting at a table in the lobby of the Hotel Deauville. On a Sunday night in Central Havana it's dangerous to sit down to drink with a fat, rosy-cheeked white guy. A sixty-year-old man like him must have lots of money. The hordes get a whiff of dollars and circle around, ready to sink in their fangs.

Everybody was getting the whiff, and we began to be besieged. Children begging for coins, whores making advances, guys offering rum, tobacco, aphrodisiacs, everything on the black market, at very low prices. Each person with his or her own story. Poverty was destroying everything and everybody, inside and out. After socialism and don't bite the hand that feeds you, it was every man for himself. To hell with compassion and all the rest of it.

FEDERICO MAYOR

– *Do you follow the U.S. electoral process closely?*

FIDEL CASTRO

– Of course, and not just the presidential campaign. I also find it amusing to watch other features of that great comedy. To offer an example: the fight for the New York Senate seat. With regard to Hillary Clinton, I remember when she appeared before Congress and so brilliantly defended a social program for medical services, which are beyond the reach of millions of poor people in America.

PEDRO JUAN GUTIERREZ

– I went walking slowly toward Ultra, up Galiano. At a government-run stand, I had a sandwich and a watery soda. It was said there were epidemics of conjunctivitis, hepatitis, and who knows what else, and the private stands were closed. It had been a terrible summer: blistering sun and humidity, bacteria scampering around happily and procreating, everybody with diarrhea, amoebic dysentery, giardiasis. The tropics, what a bliss! How lovely it must be to come visit for a week and admire the sunsets from a far-off, quiet place without getting too involved.

FEDERICO MAYOR

– How far can the privatization process go in Cuba? As for the “dollarization” of the economy, is it not an insult to both socialism and the country’s monetary sovereignty?

FIDEL CASTRO

– I have already said that privatization should be carried out with much com-

mon sense and wisdom, avoiding irrational actions. You need to make a clear distinction between different kinds of work. Some tasks are highly individual and often manual and craft-like; their large-scale production and technology are not fundamental. However, there are investments that require capital, technology and markets, in which associations with foreign companies can be highly advisable. The potential oil deposits in the 110,000 square kilometers of the Gulf of Mexico belonging to Cuba could not be explored or exploited by our country without technology and capital from abroad.

PEDRO JUAN GUTIERREZ

– What to do now? The guy next door was still making tin buckets, but he didn't want a helper. I didn't have a cent. So long as Isabel kept hustling, we could make it until December. Even better, maybe she'd take off with some Yankee. That way she could support me from far away. And if she forgot about me, it wouldn't matter. Deep down, I don't expect anything from anybody. I'd have to go work on that damn garbage truck again. It seems I was born to work at night. If only I could get a job riding with a truck driver, that would be pure happiness. Then, after a while, I'd become a driver and get my license. That's the job for me. Always on the road, always moving. Well at least this afternoon I'd go looking for Pollo. He'd have weed. I'd sell a few joints for him and that way I'd make enough to keep on until who knows when.

FIDEL CASTRO

– On the other hand, within the country, when it comes to obtaining the highest quality and yield in special crops like tobacco- the work of dedicated and almost fanatical lovers of this type of farming, which should be manual and carried out on small plots of land - no machine or big company could replace the individual work. Those people with these special qualities are given the land they need, free of charge, in order to farm it on their own. But, it would be absurd to do the same with huge sugar cane plantations that are highly mechanized.

– In the Cuban farming sector, there are different forms of ownership: individual property, cooperatives and various forms of cooperated production. Also procurement and marketing state enterprises have successfully developed.

PEDRO JUAN GUTIERREZ

– Cuba at the height of its existence as socialist construct maintained a virginal

purity, in exquisite Inquisitorial style. And all of a sudden, the guy realized that his life was over. He was living in a dump in Mantilla with a f . . -up son who supported himself by selling grass, but who spent more time in jail than he spent in their dump selling the stuff he brought back from Baracoa. He sold coconut oil, coffee, and chocolate too, on the black market, but he made his real money dealing in excellent mountain weed and he brought so much back that he could sell it cheap.

FIDEL CASTRO

– Our ideology and our preference is socialist, which bears no relation whatsoever to the selfishness, privileges and inequalities of capitalist society. In our homeland, nothing will pass into the hands of a high-ranking official, and nothing will be given away to accomplices and friends. Nothing can be efficiently exploited for the benefit of our society will pass into the hands of either Cuban or foreign individuals. At the same time, I can assure you that the safest investments in the world are those authorized in Cuba, which are protected by law and by the country's honor.

PEDRO JUAN GUTIERREZ

– At the rum dispensary, the line was around the block, but I sidled up, gave the worker a look, and handed him my bottle. He filled it up, and I gave him his thirty pesos. Right there in plain sight, in front of everyone waiting in line. If you've got money, there's no reason to stand clutching your ration book and cooling your heels for two hours just to buy a bottle of rum. F*** that. I pay double and I'm out of there in a flash. The complaints started up right away. There were the old folks with their whine, "Not fair, you have to get in line like everybody else, you have to have a ration book." It pisses them off when someone with money comes along and screws them.

FIDEL CASTRO

– As to the reference you made to the dollarization of the economy, I should say two things. Firstly, the world economy is currently dollarized. After Bretton Woods, the United States acquired the privilege of issuing the reserve currency of the world economy. Secondly, there is a national currency in Cuba that is not ruled in any way by the International Monetary Fund. As I noted earlier, that currency has experienced a sevenfold increase in value, and in record time. There is no flight of capital.

PEDRO JUAN GUTIERREZ

“Dalia, if it keeps raining like this, the wall is going to collapse on us.”

“Holy Mother of God! Don’t say things like that, child!”

“Whether I say them or not, it’s going to collapse. Say a few prayers and let’s see if we can make it last a while longer.”

“The problem is that the people who live in this building are trash. They’re neglected the place and it’s falling to pieces.”

“Dalia, the building is old, and no one ever repairs it. That’s why it’s collapsing.”

“They’ve let it fall apart. The government’s abandoned it. I can say what I want, since now I’m so old they won’t do anything to me. But listen to me, child. You’ve traveled, and you know. There’s no place in the world where the government can take care of everything. That’s why the neighborhood has become what it is. When this place belonged to the owner, the building was a gem. It was a joy to see. I paid ninety pesos a month in rent, but it was worth it because she wouldn’t let anyone fix anything themselves, not even a faucet. Nothing. She took care of everything. But only professional people lived here then, teachers and businessmen.”

“Well, Dalie, that was another time. Forget it.”

“It has to be that way again. Things can’t keep falling apart, people can’t always be without work, getting paid for sitting with their arms crossed.”

FIDEL CASTRO

– At the same time, a convertible peso has been established, on a par with the dollar, whose free circulation was simply an unavoidable need, not the result of an economic conception. I believe that in the future it will never be necessary again to ban the possession of dollars or other foreign currencies, but its free circulation for the payment of many goods and services will only last for as long as the interests of the Revolution make it advisable. Therefore, we are not concerned about the famous phrase “the dollarization of the economy.” We know very well what we are doing.

PEDRO JUAN GUTIERREZ

“Listen, don’t even think about it. The market’s already swamped. The little girls hustling in Havana are twenty years old, and they look like models. They’ve gorgeous. Vicious, too, and they’ve got deals going with the police, taxi drivers, hotel concierges. Come on, forget about it.”

“Pedrito, for God’s sake, what am I supposed to do?”

– I gave her a few ideas on the subject of food. The people in Havana were starving. Anything edible could be sold instantly.

FIDEL CASTRO

– I recently attended an international economists’ meeting in Havana. Among the participants there were representatives of financially distressed countries where debt servicing accounts for over 40% of budget spending. Previous and acting governments acquired such debts “very democratically”. There is clearly a great sense of helplessness in the face of the challenges posed by an inevitable globalization process marked so far by the fatal sign of neoliberalism. At that meeting, the representatives of the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank defended their points of view with complete freedom, but for many of those present the conclusions were very clear regarding the unsustainable nature of the prevailing economic order.

PEDRO JUAN GUTIERREZ

– As usual, the grocery lady was sitting on a box by the door of her empty stall, picking her nose. She’s fat, in her fifties, her legs covered with cellulite and big, ugly, purple varicose veins. But she doesn’t care: she always wears shorts and tiny shirts, exposing broad expanses of belly and breasts. Glancing at me, she raised her eyebrows in greeting, and kept digging in her nose, absorbed in her boogers. Then we talked for a while, going over the same old stories: her son is in jail, and his sentence was just increased to twenty years; he got himself in more trouble. Thank goodness her daughter’s a little sex kitten and can take care of herself. She’s got herself an Italian now. Ancient, ugly, and pot-bellied he may be, but he doles out dollars like there’s no tomorrow. He takes her out and shows her a good time too. She says they’ll get married soon, and he’ll take her away with him.

FIDEL CASTRO

– It is not possible to continue along the path that widens the gap between the poor and the rich countries and produces increasingly serious social inequalities within them all. At the moment, Latin American and Caribbean integration is fundamental. It is only by joining together that we can negotiate our role in this hemisphere and the same applies to the Third World countries vis-à-vis the powerful and insatiable club of the wealthy. I have often noted that such integration and joining of forces cannot wait

for profound social changes or social revolutions to take place within these individual countries.

PEDRO JUAN GUTIERREZ

– I went back to my room on the roof with its common bathroom, the most disgusting bathroom in the world, shared by fifty neighbors who multiply like rabbits, since most of them are from the east of the island. They come to Havana in clumps, fleeing poverty. In Guantanamo a person joins the police force and then arranges to be transferred to Havana (no Havana native wants to be a policeman in the city), dragging the whole family along. And somehow they all live in a twelve-foot-square room. I don't know how they manage it, but they do. And in the bathroom, s*** is piled up to the ceiling. Each day no fewer than two hundred people s***, pee, and wash in that bathroom. There's always a line. Even if you're about to crap in your pants, you have to wait. Lots of people, and I'm one of them, never wait in line: I s*** in a piece of paper and I toss the bundle onto the roof of the building next door, which isn't as high. Or into the street. Doesn't matter. Terrible, but that's how it goes. When you're at a low point, you've got to make do.

FIDEL CASTRO

– I have also said that because the current world economic order is unsustainable, it faces the very real danger of a catastrophic collapse, infinitely worse than the disaster and prolonged crisis set off in 1929 by the crash of the U.S. stock market, where stocks had been inflated beyond sustainable levels. Not even the enthusiastic and highly experienced Allan Greenspan, chairman of the U.S. Federal Reserve - whose sleepless eyes do not stray for a minute from the statistical data emanating from the uncontrollable and unpredictable roulette wheel that is the speculative system, in which 50% of U.S. families have placed their debts and invested their savings - would dare to claim that this danger does not exist. The remedy to prevent it has not been invented, nor can it be invented within such a system.

PEDRO JUAN GUTIERREZ

Cholo was happy. Mmmm. He tucked his equipment back in and began his search for a victim. "Tonight this prick of mine will get p*** for twenty pesos or my name isn't Cholo," he said to himself. And he bounced up and down and boxed at the air. He went walking along Avenida del Puerto Toward the Malecon. Hustlers, taxi drivers, bars, three

ruined old buildings which had just recently collapsed. The rubble hindered his progress. The mouths of the sewers were clogged where they opened onto the bay and s*** was flooding the street in front of the Los Marineros bar. Cholo didn't notice anything. He had always lived in the middle of decay. All he wanted was a c*** for twenty pesos. In front of Los Marineros, a group of baby sluts were waiting for customers, very young, pretty, flirtatious, smelling of perfume. It had been a while since Cholo came by this way, but he supposed that one whore was the same as the next, just as it had always been. He hailed a little mulatta. The girl was surprised that such a disgusting old man would call for her. She stayed where she was. From a distance, she shouted, "What do you want, grandpa?"

"I'm not your m*** grandfather. Come here!"

"Eh? What's wrong with you old man? Your mother's a f*** c***, asshole. Don't f*** with me or I'll cut you up."

Cholo, unruffled, called to another one. She was friendlier and came within six feet of him.

"Tell me, grandpa, what do you want? Change? We're broke. We don't have any money. Ask a tourist."

"No, I have something for you. Come here. Come closer."

"Nooo. Tell me what it is."

"I'll give you twenty pesos if you let me suck your p***... Come closer..."

"Twenty what? Cuban pesos?"

"Of course. Twenty Cuban pesos."

"You must be crazy. Did you just escape from Mazorra?"

The girl turned toward the group of eight or nine whores, and, making fun of Cholo, she shouted, "He says he'll give me twenty Cuban pesos to suck my p***. Ha ha ha, the senile old fool, ha ha ha. Hey you, heads up. Fifty bucks, dollars, for a session with us. And stinking the way you do, not even a hundred would be enough. Not to mention you've never seen a dollar in your life. So get a move on, get out of here."

The other girls laughed and laughed, mocking him.

"Go on, you stinking old fool, get lost."

Cholo got up and walked away. They were the crazy ones. He made a quick calculation. The dollar was at 23, times 50 was, 1,150. Goddamn it! It couldn't be. How could a little slut like that earn with one f*** twice what he made in a day? They'd be millionaires in... no, because they wouldn't save. They'd spend all their money on perfume and stupid makeup and purses. That's what was wrong with people. No one saved at all.

FIDEL CASTRO

– I tirelessly insist on the need for people to open their eyes to these realities. A collapse could occur before the people are prepared for it. The changes will not spring forth from anyone's head, but the heads must be prepared for these inevitable changes, which will take on a wide variety of forms and follow a wide variety of paths. From my point of view, the changes will fundamentally result from the action of the masses, which nothing would succeed in holding back.

PEDRO JUAN GUTIERREZ

– I went downstairs. The building dates back to 1936, and in its heyday it mimicked the massive banks of Boston and Philadelphia, with their solid, sober facades. In fact, the facade is still in good shape, and tourists are always amazed by it and take pictures, and it did even appear in magazines, especially as photographed on stormy days, I've seen impressive photos, with the wild sea crashing against the Malecon, in that gray-blue hurricane light, the building splashed with water but solid and August. A splendid, majestic castle in the middle of the hurricane. But inside it's falling to pieces and it's an incredible labyrinth of stairs about banisters, darkness, foul smells, cockroaches, and fresh s***. And makeshift rooms crowding the hallways and black men's quarrels and brawls. I came out onto the sidewalks and there in front of me was the old sign, so old it was almost illegible: "A Revolution without danger is not a Revolution. And a revolutionary who risks nothing is a revolutionary without honor." The slogan wasn't signed. It sounded like Fidel or Raul. On the corner there was a huge new billboard. In big, brightly colored letters, it read: "Cuba, land of men of stature." In one corner a black athlete leapt against a blue sky. I don't know. It was incomprehensible.

FIDEL CASTRO

– Nevertheless, nothing will be easy. The blindness, superficiality and irresponsibility of the so-called political class will make the road more difficult, but not impregnable.

PEDRO JUAN GUTIERREZ

Miriam lived in a terrible dump, dark and foul-smelling, in a building nearby, at 264 Tocadero. There were people in the doorway to the building. The room was ten by thirteen feet. In the back there was a tiny space for a kerosene stove, and I had to stand hunched over, because a wooden platform with a ladder cut the room in half. The bed

was on top. She put the boy down in one corner, and we took up the rest of the space, f*** frantically for hours. She liked me to treat her tenderly. Or a little tenderly, at least; she kept telling me that no man had ever f*** her that way.

“Most men don’t even wait for me to come. They come themselves, and that’s it.”

Just as we were in the middle of things, stones and dust started to rain down on us. “My God, the place is collapsing.”

FEDERICO MAYOR

– *Is there any hope for the poor to achieve a better life in the next 20 years?*

FIDEL CASTRO

– People frequently talk about the horrors of the holocaust and the genocide that have taken place throughout the century, but they seem to forget that every year, as a result of the economic order we have been discussing here, tens of millions of people starve to death or die of preventable diseases. They can wield statistics of apparently positive growth but in the end things remain the same or even worsen in the Third World countries. Growth often rests on the accumulation of consumer goods than contribute nothing to true development and a better distribution of wealth. The truth is that after several decades of neoliberalism, the rich are becoming increasingly richer while the poor are both more numerous and increasingly poorer.

PEDRO JUAN GUTIERREZ

“It’s been days since we talked, brother. Hang out and have a drink.”

Going into his room, he came back out with a full glass.

“I’ve got a bottle in there. When it’s empty, I’ll buy another one.”

“Damn it, Baldomero, have you made your fortune already?”

“Not exactly. I’m making a few pesos... I have a business that’s bringing in a little cash.”

“Ah.”

“I’m selling pork liver.”

“Ah.”

“It doesn’t do well at the market. I get it for cheap and I sell it on the side.”

“Ah.”

“I have some in the fridge. It’s great. If you hear of anyone who wants some, send them to me.”

“Pork liver is good.”

“And good for you too! I’m going to give you a piece. You’re a good guy.”

“No, no, Baldomero, that’s your business you’re talking about. You can’t give away your livelihood.”

“Listen, friend, one little piece of liver isn’t going to make or break me.”

He went into Vivian’s room and came out with a big piece. Isabel cooked it Italian style, with lots of garlic, and it was delicious. It was so big we had it for two meals. Later I bought some from him twice. He didn’t charge much.

December came, and I was waiting for the first wind from the north to set out to sea again. I had a little marijuana hidden in my room. We were getting along selling that, because Isabel had decided she wanted to play wife, claiming that Yankees made her sick.

“Who cares if they make you sick? Unless you go f*** one of them, we’re going to starve to death.

“It’s the police. Open up.”

My balls shrank. I hid everything under the mattress. It was the only thing I could think to do. Now I was in deep s***! I had two kilos of weed!

There was no time to think. They knocked hard again. Isabel started to shake. But she opened the door. A policeman looked in.

“Do you have a refrigerator?”

“No. Why?”

They had Baldomero handcuffed. He was carrying a plastic bag. Grabbing him by the neck, they shoved him forward.

“Has this citizen ever sold you liver?”

“Sold us liver? No.”

“Are you sure?”

“Sure.”

“Have you ever eaten liver provided by this citizen?”

“No.”

“Lucky for you.”

My balls dropped back down into their usual position. I stayed in the doorway taking in the scene. The policemen went asking from room to room. Everyone denied it. No one had eaten liver provided by the citizen in question. The two policemen decided to change their tactic. They stood in the middle of the roof with Baldomero in his handcuffs carrying the plastic bag. All the neighbors were watching nervously and suspiciously from their doorways. The same policeman spoke. The other one never said anything. He just put on a watch-it-I’ve-got-a-big-stick face.

“People, listen up. This citizen here was caught by a guard this afternoon just as he was coming out of the morgue with a bag full of human livers.”

FIDEL CASTRO

“People used to talk about apartheid in Africa; today we could talk about apartheid throughout the world, where over four billion people are deprived of the most basic rights of all human beings: the right to life, to health, to education, to clean drinking water, to food, to housing, to employment, to hope for their future and the future of their children. At the present pace, we will soon be deprived even of the air we breathe, increasingly poisoned by the wasteful consumer societies that pollute the elements essential for life and destroy human habitat...”

PEDRO JUAN GUTIERREZ

– Day was dawning, a red-orange stain behind heavy, dirty-gray clouds. At the mouth of the bay, the water was calm but very cold. And I was almost frozen.

– I had been fishing all night, floating thirteen hundred feet from shore, sitting in the hollow for a little raft made from an inner tube. Floating nearby were at least twenty other fishermen like me, but September and October aren’t good months. It had been sixteen days since I’d caught anything. I was like that old man from Cojimar who went fishing alone in his boat on the Gulf Stream and didn’t catch a fish for eighty-four days.

– Except that old man was a hero in the classic sense, worn down to the bone but never vanquished. There’s no heroism in me, or in anybody else anymore. These days, no one is as stubborn as he was or has such a sense of duty or devotion to their work. The spirit of the age is commercial. Money. And if it’s dollars, all the better. The stuff heroes are made of gets scarcer every day.

– That’s why politicians and clergymen talk themselves hoarse urging loyalty and solidarity. They have to keep trying or else change professions. But those of us who are hungry stay hungry, and nothing changes. The politicians and the clergymen think they can make everything change by sheer force of will, by spontaneous generation. But that’s not the way things work. We human beings are still savages, treacherous, and egotistical. We like to break off from the pack and keep watch from a distance, eluding the snapping jaws of our fellows. Then someone comes along asking us to be loyal to the pack.

FIDEL CASTRO

– The Latin American debt is so large that many nations in the region, no matter what their gross domestic product may be, do not guarantee a decent quality of life to most of their people. Their economies, which sometimes appear to be doing well according to the macroeconomic figures, have fallen prey to major financial and technological powers. All of these economies are subject to flights of capital to the wealthy countries, in amounts that nobody fully knows or can calculate. Their weak currencies are defenseless against the attacks of speculators. The hard currency reserves with which they attempt to defend their economies, at the high cost of idle funds that do not contribute to economies, at the high cost of idle funds that do not contribute to economic and social development, are lost in a matter of days when faced with any danger of devaluation. Incomes earned through a privatization that gives away national heritage are lost without providing the slightest benefit. The threat of a financial crisis or devaluation leads to overnight flight of all forms of capital, including both the short-term loans and the funds of nationals terrified by the imminent risk of seeing their savings dwindle.

PEDRO JUAN GUTIERREZ

– The night passed, me sitting slumped on the Malecon, not a cent in my pocket, no rum, no food, no joints to puff and get high on. Luckily, that crazy, old fat woman didn't show up again. I went to bed early, but I slept very badly; it was anxiety, hunger, cockroaches wandering around, a rat gnawing, and a presence in Isabel's room. The place needed to be purged, cleansed with coconut and herbs. It isn't clear exactly what's wrong, but Isabel is bad about caring for the santos, and that's why it's so murky in here. Finally I slept a little, troubled by nightmares, fears, and a terrible stink of s*** coming from the bathroom; for two days there'd been no water. People haul it up in buckets for cooking or washing, but s*** floods the toilet in the bathroom and there are—how many of us? I don't know. The count is always shifting, but there are fewer now. In the seven rooms, there must be forty of us, more or less. It's enough. There's still plenty of s*** and piss. At last the sun came up. I lay in bed a little longer, exhausted, and I fell asleep again. Then Isabel came home, dead tired.

“Oh sweetie, that American kept me up all night, now I'm exhausted and my c*** stings. My God, what an idiot; he's a moron!”

“So, explain: does the guy have a plastic dick?”

“No, no. It's the head of it, that's all. The whole head is plastic. It's a prosthesis. But he couldn't come, not with Susi or with me.”

FIDEL CASTRO

The handy formula of endlessly raising interest rates renders the country's economic life chaotic and complicated. Latin America, like the rest of the Third World, is a victim of the international economic order imposed, which I have already described as unsustainable. Divided and balkanized as they are, and seduced by deceptive illusions of progress and development emanating from the siren song of a hemispheric free trade agreement, the countries of Latin America are in danger of forever losing their independence and of being annexed by the United States.

PEDRO JUAN GUTIERREZ

– I opened the door and the slut came in, still dressed to go out, in tiny shining gold shorts with half her butt hanging out, a tight little see-through shirt showing off her beautiful naked breasts, and white spike-heeled boots. The girl was a trip, with her black hair hanging loose. But the b*** is like a cash register. She won't sleep with anyone unless she gets money for it. Lots of times, I've tried to recruit her for our little rooftop orgies, but there's no way. She's hypnotized by Yankees and dollars. The only time she has an orgasm with a client must be when they push a rolled-up bill into her c***.

FIDEL CASTRO

– Living in a consumer society does not necessarily make people educated. It is amazing, sometimes, how their knowledge can be superficial and simplistic. Cuba has raised the average educational level on its people to ninth grade, and this is just the beginning. In ten years, their average cultural level will be that of a university graduate; and that will be comprehensive, not simplistic knowledge. All of the necessary conditions have been created. No one can prevent our people from achieving the goal of being the most cultivated, in addition to having a profound political culture that is neither dogmatic nor sectarian; a political culture that is severely lacking in many of the world's wealthiest nations. WE will place at the service of this lofty goal the great technologies created by humankind, while avoiding commercial advertising.

– It would be perhaps be better to wait a while before talking about true freedom of expression and thought because that can never be reconciled with a brutal economic and social capitalist system that fails to respect culture, solidarity, and ethics.

PEDRO JUAN GUTIERREZ

A decision was made to clear all the crazies and panhandlers off the streets. Some important event was coming up, maybe the anniversary of some historic occasion or the fall tourist season. I don't know. Something important. I never know what's important. Once I used to classify everything like that. Some things were important and others weren't; some things were good and some were bad. Not anymore. Now everything seems the same to me.

FEDERICO MAYOR

— For several years now, we have seen an embryo of opposition being born on the island; that is, dissident groups are beginning to organize. This being the case, is it not perhaps time for the regime to open up to political pluralism?

PEDRO JUAN GUTIERREZ

— A green Jeep came speeding down San Lazaro, mounted with two loudspeakers and two red flags. It was broadcasting a protest speech, but it was moving so quickly the speech was impossible to understand. Only fragments of the sentences could be caught: "We're making history," "on the university steps," "a historic uprising."

— It flashed past, and the street was calm and quiet again, baking under the noonday sun, not a cloud in the sky.

— Boys from the neighborhood were swimming off the Malecon, plunging into the dirty water tainted with gasoline and oil from the ships in the harbor and all the city's s*** and piss. Everything runs off into the ocean, but the kids, and some adults too, come anyway. They spend hours in the sun, drinking rum and eating ices, ignoring the sewer smell and enjoying themselves. The tourists take pictures of them, and they stand stock still, laughing or making faces for the camera. After each photo, they drop their poses, and the children run to beg for coins.

FIDEL CASTRO

— The Revolution did away with centuries of privilege and affected the interests of the wealthiest and most influential sectors of Cuban society; it also affected

the large agricultural, mining, industrial, commercial and service companies that the United States had established in Cuba. Our country has been the target of dirty warfare, mercenary invasions and threats of direct military attacks. We were also on the brink of a nuclear war.

PEDRO JUAN GUTIERREZ

– Berta was seventy-six. She lived alone on the eighth floor, second from the top, of a building on San Lazaro, in Central Havana. It depressed her to go out on the balcony and look down on what resembled the aftermath of a bombing. Too much rubble. The ruined city murmured, rumbled. For a long time now, she hadn't even opened the balcony doors.

– More and more often she took refuge in the memories stored in her wardrobe and dresser drawers. Dresses, gloves, hats with flowers, invitations to dances, empty bottles of French perfume, undergarments made of Dutch lace, high-heeled shoes, jewelry boxes full of pearl necklaces, bracelets, chokers, earrings, pendants. Everything smelled of cedar and mothballs, and it was all threadbare, yellowed, aged. Nothing had been worn for thirty or forty years. When her husband died, Berta was sixty-three, and he was ninety-four. He was a well-known doctor in Havana. She had never loved him and had never been attracted to him. When they met, she was a lovely eighteen-year-old girl, and he was a man of forty-nine, a widower, polished and paternal. He promised her the world. She was dazzled by the glamour of it all, and five days later they were married. From that day on, Berta's life was a succession of parties and trips, the good life: Mexico, Puerto Rico, Miami, Caracas, New York.

– But everything faded slowly away. The neighborhood was no longer what it used to be. It filled up with common people from the provinces, uncouth blacks, ragged, dirty, rude people. The buildings crumbled since no one took care of them, and little by little, they became dormitories, thousands of people crowded into them like roaches, skinny, underfed, dirty, unemployed people, drinking rum at all hours, smoking marijuana, beating on drums, and multiplying like rabbits, people without perspective, with limited horizons. Everything made them laugh. What were they laughing at—everything. Nobody was sad or wanted to kill themselves or was terrified for fear the ruins would collapse and bury them alive. Not at all. In the middle of the debacle, they laughed, lived their lives, tried to enjoy themselves as best they could.

FEDERICO MAYOR

– *What are the dreams of the Cuban people today?*

FIDEL CASTRO

– I think there are 11 million dreams.

FEDERICO MAYOR

– *In what way are they different from the dreams of the previous generation?*

FIDEL CASTRO

– Before, they each dreamed of their own happiness, and today, they all dream of happiness for everyone.

PEDRO JUAN GUTIERREZ

– Omar didn't work, and he wasn't in school. He didn't do anything. All he had to wear was one pair of shorts and one shirt, both old and stained, and a worn-out pair of rubber sandals. He was poverty personified. His dream was to go to the United States and live in one of those cities where it snowed and it was cold, where a person could really bundle up. He would've liked to work as a truck driver or a bus driver, marry a blond, blue-eyed American woman, drive around in his super modern truck and have three or four very light-skinned children, thought it was possible they might turn out like their grandparents, in which case they'd be even blacker than he was. Omar was very racist. He was mestizo. His hair was kinky and he had a big mouth and dark skin, but he didn't quite look black. He was a mix, like everybody in the family. Ever since he was a kid people called him "The Moor", because he looked Arab. He knew he was handsome, but he wanted to be white, suave, well-dressed, and have lots of money and a car and a nice house. Like everyone else, he longed for what he didn't have. As soon as he saw Bert's apartment, crowded with antique furniture, rugs, china and bronze ornaments, drapes, he said to himself, "This is what I want." Omar was a professional playboy. It was the only thing he was good at; it was how he made a living. He liked to be kept by women, or by men—it made no difference. Older men and women were nice, because they were like mothers or fathers as well as lovers, and he never had to worry about money.



Havana decay



July 2003. A floating 1951 Chevy pickup with its drive shaft attached to a propeller is driven across the high seas towards Florida.

HERE'S TO YOUR HEALTH

Cuba is a small country of 11,394,043 persons as of July 2007. 18.8 % are under the age of fourteen, 70.5% are between fifteen and sixty-four and 10.7% are sixty-five or older. Cuba's population is slightly more than Michigan's (10 million) and is just 3.79% the size of the total U.S. population of 301,000,000.

In Cuba the median age is 36.3 years and climbing. The official population growth rate is 0.273%. A demographic crisis awaits Cuba as the working age population stagnates while the number of retirees soars. The United States faces a similar crisis as baby boomers retire en masse after 2010. Cuba's infant mortality rate of 6.04 per 1000 live births (2005) is on a par with infant mortality in the United States. Life expectancy is 77.7 years compared to 77.9 in the U.S.

American manufacturing and pharmaceutical companies dominate world markets. Considering the financial and technological gap between the U.S. and Cuba as well as U.S. laws that ban the sale of medicine and medical equipment, health comparisons between the two countries are a highly politicized and emotional issue for the Cuban government and general population. Most Cubans know someone who suffered or died because for lack of a medicine patented or manufactured only by American companies, putting them out of reach of Cubans even if they could afford the often-exorbitant price. The U.S. embargo fomented a black market in prescription drugs that doubles the price of already expensive American medicine. Whatever shortcomings the Cuban healthcare system may have, the U.S. embargo absorbs the blame and relieves the Cuban government of responsibility for any failures.

With this background in mind it becomes clear why health statistics are a matter of Cuban national pride and even of state security. Internal public opinion and interna-

tional propaganda touting Fidel and the Revolution depend on favorable comparisons that put the U.S. to shame. The fact that Cuban public health continues to hold on to its gains even under the crushing weight of the U.S. embargo is of incalculable value in generating internal cooperation in the absence of livable wages as well as sympathetic world public opinion in favor of Cuba. Favorable public opinion translates in to credit and loans from democratic foreign governments. If this were not enough, Cuba goes over the top by becoming the physician to the dispossessed of the world.

American policy makers have never understood that Fidel thrives when the U.S. attempts to use starvation and misery to create intolerable conditions in Cuba. Most Cubans and Latin Americans see the embargo and increasingly, trade agreements with the U.S. through the biblical parable of a third-world David versus an obscenely rich and immoral gringo Goliath.

The infant mortality rate is a key measuring stick of the health and overall well-being of a population as defined by the United Nations. The political and economic capital obtained by Cuban medical missions abroad is measurable in the U.N. general Assembly votes condemning the U.S. embargo and is fungible for billions of dollars in trade, especially Venezuelan oil. Venezuela sells 100,000 barrels of oil a day to Cuba for just US\$27 a barrel-on credit. As of this writing (June 6, 2008) oil is at all time highs around US\$138 a barrel. Cheap, high sulfur Venezuelan crude keeps Cuba functioning and her ancient fleet of pre-1960 Detroit muscle on the go.

Cuba has some 20,000 doctors in Venezuela who are concentrated in the poorest sections of the country and are a big boost to Hugo Chavez's popularity. While the Cuban doctors attend to people who have been marginalized all their lives and who have never received any real medical care, the U.S. government under George W. Bush is trying to entice the Cuban doctors to defect to the United States. It is difficult to overstate the damage this policy does to the image of the United States as a country that cares about people. The U.S. forfeits the right to lecture others, including Cuba, about human rights when it does all within its enormous power to stop the poor of the world from taking care of themselves. President Obama, as the son of a man not unlike the people Cuba assists today, you can not permit U.S. policy to penalize those living on less than two-dollars a day.

4.1 Cuban Medicine: Political and Humanitarian

Governed by a very provocative leader and living in the shadow of an angry giant, Communist Cuba became utterly dependent on the Soviet bloc, twelve time zones away. For ideological as well as practical reasons, Cuba pioneered medical diplomacy as a means to break through diplomatic and economic isolation while taking the high moral ground against the United States. For Cuba, medical diplomacy is the collaboration between countries to improve relations and simultaneously produce health benefits while creating badly needed excess returns for Cuba. Since the triumph of the Revolution, medical diplomacy has been a key element of Cuban foreign policy and foreign aid strategy. Despite Cuba's economic difficulties and the exodus of 90% of its doctors, Cuba launched medical diplomacy in 1960 by sending a team to Chile to provide disaster relief after an earthquake. Three years later and with the U.S. embargo in effect, Cuba began strategic medical diplomacy by sending a group of fifty-six doctors and nurses to Algeria. Cuba has provided medical assistance to scores of developing countries throughout the world ever since.

Cuba's alliance with Hugo Chavez's Venezuela has been so successful that the exchange of Cuban medical expertise for Venezuelan black gold now has the look and feel of large-scale commodity trading with a twist: the value of the Cuban export is set by unstable Venezuelan political gyrations while crude prices are decided in the trading pits of New York and Tokyo. After Fidel and after Raul, Chavez will be the new dean of world revolution and socialism of the 21st century. This shift could lead to changes in the perception of the current barter arrangement between the countries. As of early 2009, with the collapse in oil prices, the arrangement should remain stable. Political changes or improvements of health indices in Venezuela could alter the perceived value of Cuban medical diplomacy. The Cuban government's internal stability is vulnerable to changes in the relationship and the political fortunes of Hugo Chavez. Cuban medical diplomacy is looking for new horizons outside the Venezuela relationship, threatening to destabilize the uneasy status quo in numerous needy countries. By serving the poor in areas in which no local doctor would work, by making house calls a routine part of their medical practice and by being available free of charge 24/7, Cubans are upending the nature of doctor-patient relations wherever they practice.

They have forced the re-examination of societal values and the for-profit structure of health-care and the medical profession as a whole within the countries in which they practice. I for one hope the Cubans succeed. A truly progressive American government committed to human rights would finance the Cuban missions. Will President Barack Obama do what is right and transform U.S. Cuba policy in 2009? It is up to the American electorate to ensure that he does.

Since 1960, Cuba's conduct of medical diplomacy has improved the health of the less privileged in developing countries while improving relations with their governments. By the end of 2005, Cuban medical personnel were working in 68 countries on three continents like a mini W.H.O. Cuban medical aid has improved the lives of millions of people, even in countries whose governments are allied with the U.S. To make this effort sustainable, thousands of developing country medical personnel have received free classes, room and board in Cuba and train with Cuban specialists as apprentices in medical schools in their own countries. Every year tens of thousands of scholarship students arrive in Cuba to replace those who graduate. Cuba does not miss a single opportunity to offer and supply disaster relief assistance regardless of whether or not Cuba is on good terms with a nation's government, even the United States. In the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina Cuba offered to assist New Orleans with free medical care. Of course, the Bush administration declined and Fidel knew he would, but the symbolism of the gesture brought him enormous prestige in the eyes of many. The offer to help is typical of the win/win outcomes strategic grandmaster Fidel constantly sets up: if the offer is accepted goodwill follows and the embargo against Cuba is in jeopardy; if the offer is refused, Cuba gains the moral high-ground by putting humanitarianism ahead of politics. Cuba 1, U.S.A. 0.

4.2 Equity Capital and the Politics of Solidarity: Medical Diplomacy as Foreign Policy

Because good health is vital to personal well-being as well as societal development, the impact of Cuba's medical diplomacy on other countries has greatly improved both its bilateral relations with those countries as well as its standing and support in multilateral organizations. Therefore, as a consequence of its medical diplomacy Cuba has accumulated considerable symbolic capital (goodwill, prestige, influence, credit and power). The creation of goodwill requires an initial investment of unrequited sweat equity. The resulting I.O.U. may be accumulated, invested and spent just like money. Eventually, it can be converted into tangible goods, which in Cuba's case has meant both

bilateral and multilateral aid as well as trade, credit and foreign investment. This is the key reward of medical diplomacy.

Even before the triumph of Revolution, Fidel made the health of the individual a metaphor for the health of the body politic. Therefore, he made the achievement of developed country health indicators a national priority. Rather than compare Cuban health indicators with those of other countries at a similar level of development, he began to compare them to those of the United States. Infant mortality and life expectancy statistics took on enormous significance. Both are considered to be proxy indicators for socioeconomic development because they include a number of other indicators as inputs, including, nutrition, medical services, sanitation, housing, education, employment, economic growth and fair distribution of resources. For internal political reasons, it is important for Cuba to compare favorably with the U.S. in order to demonstrate the superiority of the Cuban way. Cuba's favorable socioeconomic indicators, which are the fruit of capital investments in the people, yield not only a more productive workforce, but also bolster the conditioned power of ideological belief essential to Fidel's long reign. They are at the center of Fidel's rebuttal of human right's objections by the United States.

This striving for world-class health indicators has been so important that in many of his major speeches, Fidel has dedicated considerable time to discussing them. In a July 26, 2006 speech, right before his own serious illness was made known to the public, Fidel cited the latest data: Cuba's infant mortality rate was 5.6 per 1000 live births, a figure less than that of the United States, which was 7.0 per 1000 live births in 2002. These achievements are watched closely and are worth billions in advertising.

Cuba has tripled its number of health care workers since 1975. Even more striking is the change in the ratio of doctors to population. This went from one doctor for every 1,393 people in 1970 to one doctor for every 159 people in 2005. This was part of Fidel's 1984 family doctor plan to put a doctor on every block. Having accomplished this in both urban and rural areas, even isolated ones, Cuba is now exporting this model to other nations and teaching them the "Cuban Way."

Cuba's accomplishments in health are not just in primary care or in the graduation of doctors. There is simultaneous emphasis on high-tech medicine

and biotechnology as well. Cuba shares its expertise through numerous international medical conferences that it holds every year and through scientific exchanges. Because research is crucial to the operation of a health campaign and can lead to badly needed income, Cuba publishes fifty-four professional medical journals and makes itself a world player in the discovery of new medicines.

As early as 1982, the U.S. government recognized Cuba's success in the health sphere in a report that affirmed that the Cuban health system was superior to those of other developing countries and rivaled that of many developed countries. Despite economic hardship during the 1990s after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the subsequent 75% plunge in trade along with the tightening of the then three-decade-old U.S. embargo, Cuba continuously increased its spending on domestic health as a percentage of G.D.P. in order to shield the most vulnerable population from the worst effects of the Special Period. Fortunately, it worked, and the initial deterioration in the population's health indicators was only temporary. Today, even some U.S. analysts who oppose Fidel Castro agree that Cuba's health system has produced impressive results despite the many material shortages that it always has faced. Some critics also recognize, albeit reluctantly, that Cuban medical diplomacy is producing positive effects in the recipient countries.

4.3 Medical Diplomacy in Action

Perhaps a good omen of things to come, during the 1970s and 1980s Cuba spent a disproportionately larger share of its G.D.P. on civilian aid program (particularly medical diplomacy) than its more developed trade partners: members of COMECON and China. This quickly generated considerable admiration for Cuba, which translated into political backing in the United Nations as well as tangible benefits from Angola, Iraq and other countries that could afford to pay fees for professional services rendered, albeit the charges were considerably below market rates.

Early success with medical diplomacy and the accumulation of goodwill as well as the ability to convert it into cash led Fidel to announce in 1984 that Cuba would train 10,000 new doctors specifically to increase the volume of international medical aid. Only Cuba trains doctors with the intent of sending them abroad like a cash crop.

This has paid off handsomely both for the government of Cuba and for the individual doctors involved, as they usually earn considerably more money abroad than in Cuba.

4. 4 Unity in Strength: Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia

It is ironic that in 1959 Fidel unsuccessfully sought financial support and oil from Venezuelan president Rómulo Betancourt. It would take forty years and many economic difficulties before another Venezuelan president, Hugo Chávez, would provide the preferential trade, credit, aid and investment the Cuban economy desperately needed. This partnership is part of the Bolivarian Alternative [to NAFTA and CAFTA] for the Americas (ALBA) to unite and integrate Latin America in a social justice-oriented trade and aid block under Venezuela's lead. It also has created an opportunity to expand Cuba's influence well beyond anything hitherto.

The most impressive Cuban medical mission ever attempted is the present one with Venezuela. The symbolic and material payoffs for Cuba are clearly demonstrated, for example, by the oil-for-doctors trade agreements between the two countries. The accords allow for preferential pricing for Cuba's exportation of professional services vis-à-vis a steady supply of Venezuelan oil, joint investments in strategically important sectors for both countries, and the provision of credit. In exchange, Cuba not only provides medical services to un-served and under-served communities within Venezuela (30,000 medical professionals, 600 comprehensive health clinics, 600 rehabilitation and physical therapy centers, 35 high technology diagnostic centers, 100,000 ophthalmologic surgeries, etc.), but also provides similar medical services in Bolivia on a smaller scale at Venezuela's expense. And to contribute to the sustainability of these health programs, Cuba will train 40,000 doctors and 5,000 healthcare workers in Venezuela and provide full medical scholarships to Cuban medical schools for 10,000 Venezuelan medical and nursing students. An additional agreement included the expansion of the Western Hemisphere wide ophthalmologic surgery program (Operation Miracle) to perform 600,000 eye operations over ten years.

The main medical aid programs are the provision of comprehensive health services throughout Venezuela through the Barrio Adentro programs (Barrio Adentro I and II). By 2007 there were over 35,000 medical personnel providing services through Barrio Adentro I, the primary health care program of Venezuela. Over 80% are Cubans. These medical diplomats had conducted 180 million medical consultations, of which 80 million were carried out in schools, workplaces, and homes. They made 30 million house calls, something previously unheard of on that scale and in those locales. Moreover, these personnel provided 120 million health educational activities as well.

During the same period, under Barrio Adentro II, which provides medical diagnostics and physical therapy and rehabilitation, 10,856 histological exams were conducted, 84.4 million clinical laboratory exams were done, 808,153 CAT scans and 47,454 nuclear magnetic resonance exams were performed, among others. The newly established Comprehensive Diagnostic Centers handled 886,609 emergency room visits and performed 7.2 million diagnostic exams; and the Comprehensive Rehabilitation Wards also established under Barrio Adentro II handled 520,401 rehabilitation consultations and applied 1.6 million rehab treatments.

The second largest medical mission operates in Bolivia, with over 1,500 Cuban doctors providing pro-bono care, particularly in impoverished rural areas and in the departments of La Paz, Santa Cruz, Cochabamba and Chuquisaca. Cuba has provided the National Ophthalmologic Institute in La Paz with modern equipment and specialists who, along with Bolivian doctors and recent graduates from the Latin American Medical School (ELAM), have treated over 3,000 indigent patients. New accords stipulate the opening of two additional ophthalmologic centers, one in Cochabamba and another in Santa Cruz. Each one will be able to treat fifty patients a day and the La Paz center will permit doctors to attend to one hundred patients daily. As a result, Bolivia will have the ability to perform ophthalmologic operations on a minimum of 50,000 patients annually.

Cuban sources indicate that by the end of 2008, their medical teams had assisted one million Bolivians free of charge and performed 23,000 ophthalmologic operations. But that's not all. Cuba created 5,000 additional medical school scholarships as well as at ELAM in Havana. In 2008, there were some 1,500 Bolivians studying at the school and another 3,000 have started the pre-med course. Cuba provides the six-year medical school free of charge to low-income students who commit to practice medicine in under served communities in their home countries upon graduation.

During ELAM'S first graduation ceremonies, Hugo Chávez announced that Venezuela would establish a second Latin American Medical School, so that jointly with Cuba, the two countries will provide free medical training to 100,000 physicians

in developing countries over the next 10 years. The benefit to millions of underserved people worldwide will be incalculable and the political payoff Cuba and Venezuela will be huge. Like a high-yield bond that keeps on paying, the geopolitical benefits will be reaped for years to come as students trained by Cuba and Venezuela ascend the ranks of academia, the media and government in their own countries. Today, medical students whom Cuba trained as doctors in the 1970s are now in positions of authority and increasing responsibility.

4.5 Smaller Nations Take Part

In the 1970s Cuba's Comprehensive Health Program was being implemented in Nicaragua and Guyana but today it is also in Belize, Bolivia, Dominica, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras and Paraguay. During this time, Cuba also has provided free medical care in its own hospitals for individuals from all over Latin America regardless of political affiliation.

In 1998, under Haitian President Rene Préval, Cuba began its medical mission with Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Today, there are approximately 500 Cuban medical technicians working in Haiti on two-year assignments in 110 of the 164 provinces across the island. The program costs the Haitian government approximately US\$ 1.8 million annually, which averages out to US\$ 375 per month for each medical professional plus room, board, transportation and exemption from airport departure taxes. This marvelously cost-effective operation brings medical attention to people who would otherwise not receive it and, in my view, the U.S. government must learn from it and emulate it to earn the title of leader of the free world.

Jamaicans too have been going to Cuba for free eye surgery as part of Operation Miracle. A spokesperson for the Jamaican Health Ministry indicated that patients reported positive feedback on the surgeries that had been administered in Cuba. The number of patients who subsequently reported complications amounted to less than three per cent of the 2,300 patients who were treated in Cuba as of 2008.

Cuba has offered disaster relief over the years to every country that has experienced a catastrophe. Most often the offer has been accepted. When a severe earthquake

struck Pakistan in 2005, Cubans arrived before Americans did. Women in the remote highlands of Pakistan began naming their newborns Fidel.

Cuba now has a long, successful track record in raising health and quality of life indicators at home and abroad, often under difficult circumstances. As a result, wealthy donor governments feel comfortable financing Cuban medical missions to third countries in what is called triangular trade in aid. Germany has funded Cuban health programs in Niger and Honduras. France provided funding for the health program in Haiti. Japan stepped up and provided two million doses of vaccines for 800,000 children and US\$ 57 million to equip a hospital in Honduras where a Cuban medical brigade works.

Multilateral agencies, such as the World Health Organization (W.H.O.) and the Pan American Health Organization (P.A.H.O.) also finance medical services provided by Cuba for third countries. Both organizations provided funding for Cuba's medical education initiatives. Cuba's Comprehensive Health Program is supported by 85 NGOs and through triangular trade in aid has received US\$ 2.97 million in support. President Obama, please hear my plea. If Cuba can achieve all of this with the world's pocket change, why cant we?

4.6 Medical Diplomacy Worldwide

In the 1970s and 80s Cuba dispatched large civilian assistance programs in Africa to complement its military support of Marxist governments in Angola and Ethiopia. With the fall of the Soviet bloc, Cuba's program was scaled back severely, but not disbanded. Having suffered a post-Apartheid brain drain, South Africa began importing Cuban doctors in 1996. By 1998 there were 400 Cuban doctors practicing medicine in Black townships and rural areas. By 2004, there were about 1200 Cuban doctors working in Africa, including in Angola, Botswana, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea,

Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

On the African continent, South Africa finances some of the Cuban medical expeditions in third countries. This South African-Cuban alliance is much more limited in scope than the Venezuelan-Cuban arrangements. Discussions on the extension of Cuban medical aid into the rest of the African continent and a trilateral agreement to deploy over 100 Cuban doctors in Mali with US\$1 million in South African financing, were concluded in 2004. Cuba has also deployed 400 doctors to Gambia. As of December 2007, the Comprehensive Health Program was in Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Chad, Eritrea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea-Conkary, Equatorial Guinea, Mali, Namibia, Niger, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe.

Cuban medical teams have also worked in East Timor since 2004 to create an independent healthcare system. Over 200 medical professionals provide a variety of services. At the same time, Cuba offers full medical school scholarships to 800 East Timorese students who promise to implement a healthcare program in their country.

Recent Cuban disaster relief medical missions are still providing assistance in post-tsunami Indonesia and post-earthquake Pakistan. Shortly after the tsunami, Cuba sent a medical team and equipment to provide disaster relief. At the time, the team was handling over 150 consultations daily in a military field hospital and a polyclinic. They also were providing some preventive as well as curative care on their visits to refugee camps. Less than a week after the devastating October 2005 earthquake in Pakistan, Cuba sent a team of highly experienced disaster relief specialists comprised of 2300 doctors, nurses and medical technicians. Part of the team worked in refugee camps and Pakistani hospitals. The rest worked in thirty field hospitals located across the earthquake-stricken zone. The team brought everything they would need to establish, equip, and run those hospitals. The cost to Cuba was not insignificant. Two of the hospitals alone cost half a million dollars each. In May 2006, Cuba sent fifty-four emergency electrical generators as well.

Cuba has consistently offered or provided aid to Armenia, Iran, Turkey, Russia, and all Latin American countries that have suffered natural or man-made disasters. In 1990 I visited a Havana hospital and met Ukranian children recovering from the 1986 Chernobyl disaster. Incredibly, they continued to receive care throughout the worst of the Special Period.

Medical education missions work in tandem with medical diplomacy. Among other things, free medical education allows Cuba to inculcate its values in young people worldwide.

Since the 1970s, Cuba has offered on-the-job training, seminars, courses and full medical education scholarships. Cuban medical specialists have either established medical schools or lectured in medical faculties in Angola, Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Nicaragua, and Yemen. They continue to this day.

Cuba has long provided full scholarships for students from developing countries to study from secondary school through postgraduate studies. Since 1961, 45,000 foreign scholarship students have graduated in various medical disciplines from Cuban schools. Nearly half graduated from institutions of higher education. Graduation levels peaked in the 1980s before the fall of the Soviet bloc. Today, thanks to Venezuela, scholarship offerings are on the rise again.

The Latin American Medical School (ELAM) was established in 1998 specifically to train students from poor communities in Latin American and African countries. In exchange for full scholarships, these students must be willing to return to their countries and practice medicine in poor communities for at least five years. After meeting with members of the Congressional Black Caucus, Fidel announced a symbolically significant plan for medical diplomacy with the United States: 500 full scholarships to Cuba's ELAM for U.S. minority students. Half of the scholarships would be for African Americans and the other half divided between Hispanics and American Indians. So far only a few Americans have accepted the offer.

There were a total of 10,661 foreign medical students from 27 countries studying in Cuba at the ELAM during the 2005-2006 academic year. Of this total, 10,084 were enrolled in medicine, 67 in dentistry, 134 in nursing, and 376 in health technology. This is triple the number of medical students enrolled in 2002. To train French-speaking Africans and Haitians, the Cuban Government established the Caribbean Medical School in Santiago de Cuba, where 254 Haitians and 51 Malian students were studying in 2002. As I have traveled across Latin America and observed the health and welfare of parents and children from Buenos Aires to Monterrey, I realized I could quickly deduce much about a person by good or bad teeth. In Cuba, on the other hand, everyone seems to have perfect teeth and gums.

Graduates from these medical schools take the National Final Cuban Examinations (NFCE) at the end of their program and then do an internship in their home countries. Then they take their home country's qualifying examination to become licensed to practice medicine. Reports from Chile, which has the highest medical standards in Latin America and a rigorous university system and medical licensing requirements, indicate that the first seven Chilean students who graduated from ELAM and returned to Chile have had their education validated by the University of Chile and have entered successfully into Chile's medical profession. This shows that the quality of education provided at ELAM is rigorous. The fact that Cuban doctors who have

immigrated to Chile on an individual basis have also had their credentials validated by the University of Chile attests to the overall quality of Cuban medical education.

4.7 Cuban Medical Diplomacy is Liquid

Prestige and respect are the wages of Cuban medical diplomacy. They are well deserved and material benefits flow from them. The training of foreign future leaders in the medical field who owe their success to Fidel's Cuba ensures that the U.S. embargo will never work. Cuba's medical diplomacy forms the bedrock of Cuba's charm offensive to isolate the United States and it has succeeded. United Nations action on issues critical to Fidel's Cuba, such as an end to the U.S. embargo and human rights abuses, is overwhelmingly in Fidel's favor. Indeed, Cuba was elected to the U.N. Human Rights Council by direct, secret ballot in which all member states were elected individually and not in blocs. As Paraguayan President Nicanor Duarte Frutos explained in a press conference, his country would abstain from the U.S. sponsored anti-Cuba resolution at the U.N. Human Rights Commission in Geneva, despite President Bush's personal call in April 2004, because a cooperation agreement with Cuba provided badly needed medical services to Paraguay and 600 Paraguayan youths from very poor families study on full scholarships in Cuba.

The State Department is aware that in 2005 General Assembly votes, only Israel, the Marshall Islands and Palau supported the U.S. embargo on Cuba. This was the fourteenth consecutive time in which it was roundly condemned but remains intact due to U.S. Security Council veto power. Among Cuba's trading partners, voting coincidence with the U.S. ranked between 6 and 22 % during 2005. The overall average for all countries was only 25%. The Latin American average was 19.7%. Clearly, the U.S. position on a host of issues is unpopular. President Obama, you said you would go before the U.N. to let the world know America is back. The world is waiting.

The Asian group average was 18.7%; the African group averaged 13.5%; the Eastern European group averaged 40.4%; and the Western European and Others (Australia, New Zealand) came in at 46.7%. Clearly, Cuba's medical diplomacy is a contributing factor to this pattern. Rather than isolating Cuba, it is the U.S. that is out of step.

Far from being marginalized by Washington's anti-Castro offensive, Cuba is an influential member of the Non-Aligned Movement and was elected its leader. In July 2006, Fidel attended the MERCOSUR summit, which opened with the signing of trade

agreements with Cuba for mutual preferential market access. The agreement strengthened the already existing bilateral agreements on preferential tariffs that Cuba had with each of the MERCOSUR members: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay. Although the amount of trade between Cuba and MERCOSUR is small, the agreement was geopolitically important for its timing just before the release of the U.S.-sponsored Commission for a Free Cuba's tough report recommending tightening the U.S. embargo (as if that were possible) and promoting regime change.

Cuba's export earnings from medical diplomacy are now a key source of income. Data on the breakdown of benefits is difficult to establish, not least of all because the Cubans are understandably circumspect in providing information. Rates paid to Cuba for doctors have ranged from zero to some rate well below U.S. market prices. Rates depend more on the recipient's ability to pay than any other factor. Nonetheless, the amounts are no doubt truly significant and rival earnings from tourism. The Economist Intelligence Unit estimated that the increase in non-tourism services exports between 2003 and 2005 was US\$1.2 billion for a total of US\$2.4 billion, which puts non-tourism services ahead of gross tourism receipts of US\$2.3 billion in 2005. Most of this must be medical diplomacy.

Official data for export earnings from medical products (medicines and equipment) were below US\$100 million in 2004, but there have been press reports citing a figure of US\$300 million for such products. Cuba also exports biotechnology products to 40 countries but (understandably) does not release sales data. Two important earnings streams are the licensed manufacture of Cuban medicines in other countries and as well as joint venture production facilities abroad. Havana officials I spoke with emphasized the importance of these ventures but do not provide details. Cuba has licensing agreements, including one in the U.S. for anti-cancer drugs and a joint venture production facility in China. Treatment facilities have been built in other countries, particularly in the field of ophthalmology, under agreement with Venezuela. The oil-for-doctors barter is critical to Cuba's economy because of preferential and stable pricing for Cuba's professional services exports and because Venezuela insulates Cuba from any escalation of oil prices, much as the U.S.S.R. did. In late 2008 oil prices collapsed and remain low as of this writing, but low oil prices are a temporary condition resulting from the deflationary financial crisis. Prices will climb markedly again in the near future. Finally, between 2002 and 2006 OPEC authorized US\$50 million in grants for a range of Cuban physical development programs abroad.

These rewards make medical diplomacy well worth the effort, not to mention the important humanitarian benefits.

4.8 Tiny Cuba Raises the Bar and Sets the Standard

Taking medical diplomacy a degree further, at the 2005 MERCOSUR summit in Córdoba, Argentina, Fidel called for a social agenda to globalize solidarity in health and education. He offered Cuba's wealth of experience in health and education to support that agenda. In these remarks, he laid down a gauntlet not only for the Bush Administration. Now is the time for president Obama to meet this challenge.

The export of Cuban doctors also provides a safety valve for disgruntled medical professionals who earn much less at home than less skilled workers in the tourism sector.

Their opportunities for enrichment abroad are high both within the parameters of medical diplomacy and even more so beyond it. This has led to a number of defections and embarrassments for Cuba. In an effort to break the oil-for-doctors trade that supports the Cuban economy, the Bush Administration announced a change in its Cuba policy to facilitate immigration to the U.S. for Cuban doctors sent abroad by Cuba. This is in stark contrast to the wet foot/dry foot policy. The sordid aim of the G.W. Bush administration was to tempt Cuban doctors with vastly increased earnings and an incomparably superior material quality of life in the U.S. as a strategy to foil Cuban medical diplomacy at the expense of those most in need in developing countries. President Obama, we both know that enticing Cuban doctors to claim asylum and then claiming they are fleeing repression is not the American Way. The fact that the Bush administration tried to destroy Cuba's medical diplomacy program shows that United States foreign policy has been adrift without a moral compass. Now is the time for Barack Obama and the Democratic Party to bring U.S. Cuba policy out of the Cold War and into the 21st century.

Cuba, with its moribund economy, earns and gets more accolades for helping those in need around the world than the United States, with all its billions in foreign aid. In Latin America, the U.S. is seen as having an ulterior motive and does not get the respect it deserves.

President Obama, hear me. As you travel around the world, you sell America by selling yourself, and it's working. Your V.O.A. speech to Iran and trip to Turkey will generate more good will and understanding than billions spent on advertising in the Muslim world. But gestures must be followed by deeds or the world public will label you a hypocrite within twelve months. American foreign policy must change.

EMBARGO LOGIC

“The U.S. embargo has dramatically harmed the health and nutrition of large numbers of ordinary Cuban citizens.”

– *The American Association for World Health*

“For the thing we should never do in dealing with revolutionary countries, in which the world abounds, is to push them behind an iron curtain raised by ourselves. On the contrary, even when they have been seduced and subverted and are drawn across the line, the right thing to do is to keep the way open for their return.”

– *Walter Lippmann, July 1959*

“We should lift all trade sanctions against Cuba. If there are scarcities of food or medicine, that there be no doubt about who is responsible. U.S. citizens should be permitted to travel freely to Cuba. They will do as good a job as any trained diplomat in conveying American values and beliefs to the Cuban people.”

– *Sen. Christopher Dodd, 1999*

Democratic countries that wish to help the Cuban people should recognize the existence of a new situation that calls for new thinking. The policy of isolating Cuba and favoring confrontation, practiced for decades by U.S. authorities, should be re-

placed by mechanisms of contacts, fundamentally with [Cuban] society, without excluding eventual meetings with the Cuban government, as done by the Nixon and Reagan Administrations with the Soviet Union, the countries of Eastern Europe, China, and Vietnam, and now attempted with North Korea. The goal would be to contribute to creating a less tense atmosphere, where it would be difficult for the hardliners to obtain alibis to cultivate false nationalism and to block changes. Immediate steps could be taken such as permitting Cuban Americans to visit the island and help their family and friends economically without restriction. This step would make people who receive assistance more independent of the totalitarian state. It would also be very valuable to promote exchanges between the American and Cuban people in all spheres, including cultural, academic, scientific, and sports.

– *Dr. Oscar Espinosa Chepe, Cuban economist jailed in 2003*

On October 6, 1976, a McDonnell Douglass DC-8 exploded at altitude as it approached Barbados. 73 people, including Cuba's teenaged Olympic fencing team, were killed. In an incident that preceded post 9-11-01 would-be shoe bomber Richard Reed and wanna-be shampoo bombers by 25 years, a bomb made of plastics disguised as a tube of Colgate toothpaste was smuggled on board Cubana flight 455 under the direction of Luis Posada Carilles, an anti-Castro Cuban exile financed by the American taxpayer while George Herbert Walker Bush was Director of the C.I.A. The incident remains the first and only mid-air bombing of a civilian airliner in the Western Hemisphere and association with the downing of flight 455, as I describe below, sullies the good name of the United States. Even now in 2008, U.S. jurisprudence, precedent, political expediency and tradition oblige our country to defend and protect those who would hijack airliners and ships, kidnap, take hostages or commit murder of their own countrymen as long as they're Cuban nationals while the Castros are in power. How did we get to this strange and grotesque place? Is not the right to life the most basic of human rights? Does the history of this incident, known to every Cuban schoolchild, endear Cubans to the U.S. government? Americans, above all the president, need to know that the Cuban Adjustment Act, various other laws collectively known as the Cuban Embargo and the ensuing policy logic have led us down the path of sanctioned murder and starvation as political tools to force change in Cuba's government in the name of liberty for the Cuban people.. For, as we shall see, the embargo has become much more than a prohibition on commercial intercourse with a hostile foreign government and ironically, has extended Fidel and Raul Castro's lease on power indefinitely while Cuban political evolution is frozen in time... just like the cars on the Malecon.

5. 1 Background to the terrorist bombing of Flight 455

As early as June 1976, the C.I.A. had concrete advance intelligence on generalized plans by Cuban exile terrorist groups to bomb a Cuban airliner.

In 2005 The national security archive posted documents showing that the F.B.I's attaché in Caracas had multiple contacts with one of the Venezuelans who placed the bomb on the plane, and provided him with a visa to the U.S. five days before the bombing, despite suspicions that he was engaged in terrorist activities at the direction of Luis Posada Carriles. Posada had spoken of plans to "hit" a Cuban airliner only days before Cubana Flight 455 exploded, according to a declassified **C.I.A. document** from 1976 made public by the National Security Archive. The highly detailed intelligence was provided by a source known as "a former Venezuelan government official" who "is usually a reliable reporter," according to the classified report.

The case came to public attention in 2005 after Posada attempted to sneak into the United States under an assumed name while using a fake Salvadoran passport and was caught by U.S. Customs at the Mexican border. He then asked for political asylum from the G. W. Bush Administration, correctly believing that the Bush clan would be sympathetic to him. After living for two months in Miami unmolested by law enforcement, he was detained after vocal diplomatic protests by the Venezuelan government, which considers him a terrorist fugitive. Venezuelan authorities requested his extradition back to Caracas where he escaped in 1985 after being incarcerated for the bombing of Flight 455. The reader is advised that Posada was a fugitive from Venezuelan justice decades before Hugo Chavez became president of that country. This did not stop the Bush State Department from using Chavez as an excuse for not sending Posada back to face justice.... It is difficult to overestimate the damage done to the credibility of the United States in Latin America by the Bush administration's refusal to extradite a convicted airplane bomber while constantly invoking the 9-11 attacks as rationale for its domestic and foreign policies. The press agencies of Cuba, Venezuela and much of Latin America have informed hundreds of millions of people about this and will not let them forget about it. The anti-American propaganda value of Flight 455 is incalculable and can only be remedied when the Obama Administration proves that change is more than a slogan and does the right thing about Posada and his henchmen.

5. 2 History of a Massacre

The C.I.A. document described a \$1000-a-plate fundraiser in Caracas held between September 22 and October 5, 1976, to support the activities of Orlando Bosch, the head of C.O.R.U., which the F.B.I. described as “an anti-Castro terrorist umbrella organization.” The informant quoted Bosch as making an offer to Venezuelan officials (long before Hugo Chavez) to forgo acts of violence in the United States when President Carlos Andres Perez visited the U.N. in November, in return for “a substantial cash contribution to [Bosch’s] organization.” Bosch was also overheard stating: “Now that our organization has come out of the Letelier job looking good, we are going to try something else.” Several days later, Posada was reported to have stated that “we are going to hit a Cuban airplane” and “Orlando has the details.” (Both the Bosch and Posada statements were cited in an October 18th, 1976 report to Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.¹

Peter Kornbluh, director of the Cuba Documentation Project at the National Security Archive, called these documents “part of a trove of intelligence records that provide leads and evidence on major acts of terrorism committed by violent anti-Castro groups.” He called on the C.I.A. to fully declassify its voluminous files on Posada “as a concrete contribution to justice for those who have committed acts of terror The Archive also posted a declassified **C.I.A. summary** that provided new details of Agency ties to Posada and Bosch in the 1960s and 70s. The C.I.A. “traces” noted that Posada “was recruited by the Agency to serve as a Maritime Training Branch instructor” in early 1965 and also was “used as a source of information on Cuban exile activities.” The C.I.A. continued to maintain relations with Posada after he became a high ranking official in the Venezuelan secret police, DISIP, between 1967 and 1974, although the nature of Posada’s work for the Agency during that time remains censored in the document. The C.I.A. also admitted that it had multiple contacts with Orlando Bosch in 1962 and 1963.²

In addition, the Archive posted a declassified **F.B.I. document** dated October 21, 1976, citing sources that stated that C.O.R.U. “was responsible for the bombing of the Cubana Airlines DC-8 on October 6, 1976.” The source quoted a C.O.R.U. member, Secundino Carrera, as stating “this bombing and the resulting deaths were fully justified because C.O.R.U. was at war with the Fidel Castro regime.” At the time, Orlando Bosch led

¹ Kornbluh, Peter. **The Posada File: Part II** <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB157/index.htm>

² *ibid.*

C.O.R.U.³

According to a declassified document, C.O.R.U. was founded by an alliance of Cuban exile groups at a meeting in a small town called Bonao in the Dominican Republic in June 1976. In a report on Orlando Bosch's group Accion Cubana, F.B.I. sources stated that "these groups agreed to jointly participate in the planning, financing, and carrying out of terrorist operations and attacks against Cuba." Bosch, according to the F.B.I., was committed to para-military attacks on countries he believed supported Cuba, including Colombia, Panama and Mexico. According to the document, the alliance discussed the kidnapping and execution of a diplomat. In July 1976, C.O.R.U. members did in fact attempt to kidnap the Cuban ambassador to Mexico; one of his aides was shot and killed.⁴

After Posada escaped from prison in Caracas, he flew aboard a private aircraft to Aruba, and was then taken to El Salvador where he assumed the alias "Ramon Medina" and became "support director" for the illicit contra resupply operation being run by the Reagan White House out of Illopango airbase in San Salvador in the 1980's. In a 31 page deposition given to F.B.I. agents in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, as part of the Independent Counsel investigation into the Iran-Contra scandal, Posada detailed his participation in these covert operations, including flying on resupply missions for contra soldiers in southern Nicaragua.⁵ The operations were covert because they violated U.S. as well as international law and were acts of war against a country at peace with the United States. But Reagan was obsessed with Nicaragua and pushed U.S. and international law aside, behavior repeated by G.W. Bush in Iraq. Reagan's obsession with tiny Nicaragua was such that he approved arms shipments to Islamic Iran, where blindfolded American hostages languished and served as the indignant centerpiece of Reagan's 1980 electoral campaign only a few years earlier. Posada was happy to help stop Nicaragua from becoming "another Cuba," where thousands of Cuban doctors tended to the sick, penniless and malnourished while Cuban teachers taught illiterate peasants to read and Cuban soldiers advised the Nicaraguan army as they fought the Contras and braced for an outright U.S. invasion.

In a personal incident I will never forget, while walking down a street in Esteli, Nicaragua, in 1988, I was accosted by a group of desperate Nicaraguans convinced that I was a Cuban medic who could save the life of their loved one.

³ Kornbluh, Peter. **The Posada File: Part II** <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB157/index.htm>

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ *ibid.*

1 - Mr. I. G. Held
1 - Mr. J. B. Adams
1 - Mr. D. W. Moore
1 - Mr. W. K. DeBruler
November 5, 1976

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Honorable Henry A. Kissinger
The Secretary of State
Washington, D. C. 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

In connection with the loss of ^(D) Cubana Airlines Flight Number 455 in the Caribbean Sea on October 6, 1976, a confidential source of our Miami Office who has provided reliable information in the past, reported on November 1, 1976, the following significant information which is summarized below:

On October 23 and 24, 1976, our confidential source ascertained from Ricardo Morales Navarrete, an official of the Venezuelan Intelligence Service (DISIP), that the bombing of the Cubana Airlines DC-8 was planned, in part, in Caracas, Venezuela, at two meetings attended by Morales Navarrete, Luis Posada Carriles and Frank Castro. On one occasion, Gustavo Castillo was present. One of the meetings took place in the apartment of Morales Navarrete located in the Anaeco Hilton Hotel. Morales Navarrete reportedly stated that this group had previously attempted to bomb Cubana aircraft in Panama and in Jamaica. It is noted that Castro and Castillo are American citizens who have been active in anti-Castro terrorist activities in the past. Castro, a resident of the Dominican Republic, is a leader of Coordination of United Revolutionary Organizations (CORU), an anti-Castro terrorist organization which has claimed responsibility for numerous terrorist acts throughout the Caribbean. Castillo is a subject in an attempted kidnapping plot against the Cuban Consul in Merida, Mexico, on July 23, 1976, engineered by CORU which resulted in the death of the Consul's bodyguard. Two other CORU members who are Miami residents are currently jailed in Mexico

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Dep. AD Adm.
Dep. AD Inv.
Asst. Dir.:
Adm. Serv.
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Gen. Inv.
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Plan. & Eval.
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Spec. Inv.
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Director's Sec'y

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~~Classified by 6008 Director~~
~~Exempt from GDS Categories 2 and 3~~
~~Date of Declassification Indefinite~~

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ROUTE IN ENVELOPE

Relayed personally to A.G.'s office by Sherry G.W. Houschick

CHM
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TELETYPE UNIT

honorable Henry A. Kissinger

for this act. Castillo was able to escape from Mexico and was known to have fled from Caracas to Puerto Rico on October 15, 1976, following the arrest of Posada, Orlando Bosch Avila and others, in connection with the Cubana air crash. Castillo's present whereabouts is unknown.

Morales Navarrete told our source that some people in the Venezuelan Government are involved in the Cubana DC-8 bombing and that if Posada talks, then Morales Navarrete will "go down the tube" in a Venezuelan-style Watergate. Carlos Fabri, a DISIP bomb expert and friend of Posada, is reported to be involved in that bombing. The Venezuelan Judicial Technical Police reportedly have knowledge of the participants in this act but have been prohibited from investigating by DISIP officials who wish to cover up Venezuelan participation. Posada and Fabri have previously been arrested by Venezuelan authorities for providing false identification and explosives to Bosch.

According to Morales Navarrete, arrested suspect Hernan Ricardo Lozano telephoned Bosch from Trinidad stating "a bus with 73 dogs went off a cliff and all got killed."

Morales Navarrete stated that Gustavo Castillo and members of his "Youth of the Star" group composed of Gaspar Jimenez, Orestes Ruiz Hernandez, Duncy Perez Alamo and Raciell Rodriguez Gonzalez are responsible for the following terrorist actions in the Miami, Florida, area: bombing of the Dominican Consulate, October 6, 1975; bombing of the Dominican Airlines ticket office, October 20, 1975; bombings at the Broward County Court House, October 10, 1975; and attempted bombing of a Bahamasair Airliner at Miami International Airport, November 27, 1975. Jimenez and Ruiz Hernandez are in jail in Mexico in connection with the attempted kidnapping of the Cuban Consul.

Morales Navarrete also stated that Bosch told him that Guillermo Novo traveled to Chile in early 1975 to visit Bosch. At that time, Novo made contact with the ultra-right wing organization known as "Fatherland and Liberty." According to Morales Navarrete the death of Orlando Letelier in Washington, D.C., on September 21, 1976, was the result of an agreement between Novo and this group, some members of which are also members of the Chilean National Directorate for Intelligence (DINA).

Honorable Henry A. Kissinger

According to our source, the Venezuelan Government now disclaims knowledge of Morales Navarrete. Calls to his apartment and office are answered by unknown individuals who state that they do not know Morales Navarrete. Morales Navarrete's girlfriend in Miami, Florida, was instructed by him not to call as "he does not exist."

Most of the above information was told to our source in strict confidence by Morales Navarrete and disclosure of this information would immediately compromise our source. Our source has requested that this information not be divulged outside of the U. S. Government. No action may be taken on the information mentioned herein which would compromise our sensitive and valuable informant.

Sincerely yours,

Clarence M. Kelley
Director

honorab!e Henry A. Kissinger

NOTE:

The above information was reported to Miami by Raul Diaz, Organized Crime Bureau, Dade County Public Safety Department, Florida, who traveled to Caracas, Venezuela, on 10/22/76 to convince Morales Navarrete to testify in an upcoming state trial of Rolando Otero, an anti-Castro terrorist, in Miami.

This matter is being followed closely. Miami is investigating bombings allegedly committed by Castillo under separate captions. Miami initiated investigation of "Fatherland and Liberty" group on 10/3/73; however, case was closed in March, 1975, and investigation revealed organization was never formed. Miami will be instructed to reinstitute investigation of "Fatherland and Liberty" to determine if such a group now exists in this country.

A similar letter has been prepared for the Attorney

General.

APPROVED:

Director

Assoc. Dir.

Dep. AD Adm.

Dep. AD Inv.

Adm. Serv.

Ext. Affairs

Fin. & Pers.

Gen. Inv.

Ident.

Intell.

Legal Coun.

Plan. & Insp.

Rec. Mgt.

S. & T. Serv.

Spec. Inv.

Training

According to Posada, he was able to save \$40,000 from his covert ops pay and lived on that in Central America after the Iran-Contra scandal broke in late 1986 and the resupply operation was shut down. When he ran out of money, he asked another exile figure, Rafael Quintero for help. “Quintero told him to send one of his paintings to [Richard] Secord,” the retired U.S. special forces official who collaborated with Oliver North in selling arms to Iran and transferring the profits to sustaining the contra war. According to the deposition, “Posada did so and Secord sent Posada \$1000 for it.”⁶

A source in Venezuela supplied the C.I.A. with detailed intelligence on a fundraiser held for Orlando Bosch and his organization C.O.R.U. after he arrived in Caracas in September 1976. The source described the dinner at the house of a Cuban exile doctor, Hildo Folgar, which included Venezuelan government officials. Bosch was said to have essentially asked for a bribe in order to refrain from acts of violence during the United Nations meeting in November 1976, which would be attended by Venezuelan President Carlos Andres Perez. He was also quoted as saying that his group had done a “great job” in assassinating former Chilean ambassador Orlando Letelier in Washington D.C. on September 21, and now was going to “try something else.” A few days later, according to this intelligence report, Luis Posada Carriles was overheard to say that “we are going to hit a Cuban airplane” and “Orlando has the details.”⁷

In the aftermath of the bombing of the Cubana flight, the C.I.A. ran “traces” on dozens of anti-Castro exiles that might be linked to the atrocity. This document records the summaries of traces on the two exiles that had by then been arrested in Caracas, Orlando Bosch and Luis Posada. The C.I.A. noted that agents had had multiple contacts with Bosch in 1962 and 1963; and the Agency acknowledged that it had employed Luis Posada starting in 1965 and that he was a “demolitions expert.” The C.I.A. also noted that he provided information to them on the activities of other exile groups. It censored a section of the document that described the services he performed for the C.I.A. while a high official in the Venezuelan secret police, DISIP, between 1967 and 1974. Other C.I.A. records show that the Agency continued to have contact with Posada until June of 1976, more than eleven years after he was first recruited.⁸

The F.B.I. transmits information from a source that has spoken with a member of C.O.R.U. named Secundino Carrera who admitted “that C.O.R.U. was responsible for the bombing of the Cubana Airlines DC-8 on October 6, 1976.” Carrera justifies the bomb-

⁶ Kornbluh, Peter. **The Posada File: Part II** <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB157/index.htm>

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ *ibid.*

ing as an act of war. The memo indicates that the bombing had caused some dissention in C.O.R.U. over its tactics, but that the organization headed by Orlando Bosch is planning to sell bonds to finance future operations.⁹

This F.B.I. report contains a range of information on “a small terrorist organization headed by Orlando Bosch Avila,” and other Cuban exile terrorists. Based on sources close to Bosch’s group, Accion Cubana, the report details Bosch’s efforts to raise funds from specific individuals in Miami, Caracas, and elsewhere. The F.B.I. also reports on the activities of Guillermo and Ignacio Novo, who are described as “two Cuban exiles with long records of terrorist activities. Most importantly, on pages 8 and 9, the document describes the meeting in the Dominican Republic where C.O.R.U. was created in June 1976 to unify five different exile groups. According to the memo, “these groups agreed to jointly participate in the planning, financing and carrying out terrorist operations and attacks against Cuba” and targets in other countries.¹⁰

5. 3 Posada and Reagan’s Iran-Contra Operations

For those readers who have forgotten or were too young to remember, in the 1980s the Reagan administration engaged in illicit weapons sales to the Islamic Republic of Iran to finance Nicaraguan counterrevolutionary mercenaries (contras). Reagan likened the contras to the founding fathers of the United States even as they blew up civilian hospitals, murdered peasants and raped girls in front of their parents and forced fathers to have intercourse with their daughters for the Contra soldiers’ entertainment. The goal was to make Nicaragua ungovernable while the leftwing Sandinistas, democratically elected in 1984 after a popular revolution toppled the Somoza dictatorship in July 1979, remained in power. The operations were termed “Low Intensity Conflict” and were applied to other countries such as Afghanistan and Angola. Americans were outraged at our association with the barbaric Contras and in 1984 the United States

⁹ Kornbluh, Peter. **The Posada File: Part II** <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB157/index.htm>

¹⁰ *ibid.*

Congress passed the Boland amendment prohibiting further United States financial support of the “contras,” but Reagan was undeterred. He was careful not to leave an incriminating paper trail and relied instead on several personalities in whom he trusted to get the job done, including C.I.A. Director William Casey. He then gave them broad discretion to carry out his secret mission. The entity established by Lt. Col. Oliver North and retired Pentagon officer, Richard Secord to illicitly sustain the contra war became known as “BC.” At Illopango airbase, known as “Cincinnati” in the BC records, the¹¹ Reagan administration secretly established a mini air force of re-supply planes along with warehouses of supplies. After Luis Posada escaped from prison in Caracas in 1985, he was given a high position as “support director” of the Illopango operation, working under another Cuban exile, Felix Rodriguez who used the codename “Max Gomez.”¹²

Two F.B.I. agents interviewed Posada at the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa, Honduras in February 1992. He described in detail his work for the contra war, escape from a Venezuelan jail and sojourn in a private aircraft to Aruba, and El Salvador.¹³ The 31- page interview transcript also provides extensive details of his activities in El Salvador and Guatemala after the Iran Contra scandal broke in November 1986 and after the contra supply operation was shut down. Although Posada accumulated \$40,000 from the contra work he and others were paid from arms’ sales to Iran, he eventually ran out of money. Like a recidivist felon released from prison, men like Posada tend to return to what they know best: murder and destruction.

The National Security Archive sought the declassification of the Posada files through the Freedom of Information Act and called on the U.S. to declassify all intelligence on Posada. “Now is the time for the government to come clean on Posada’s covert past and his involvement in international terrorism,” said Peter Kornbluh. “His victims, the public, and the courts have a right to know.”

The Bush administration refused to certify that he is a terrorist.

Two Trinidad and Tobago police officers interrogated Hernan Ricardo Lozano and Freddy Lugo immediately after the plane went down. Their statements were turned over as evidence to a special investigative commission in Barbados after the crime. Information derived from the interrogations suggested that the first call the bombers placed after the

¹² Kornbluh, Peter. **The Posada File: Part II** <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB157/index.htm>

¹³ *ibid.*

attack was to the office of Luis Posada's security company ICI, which employed Ricardo. Ricardo claimed to have been a C.I.A. agent (but later retracted that claim). He said that he had been paid \$16,000 to sabotage the plane and that Lugo was paid \$8,000.¹⁴

The interrogations revealed that a tube of Colgate toothpaste had been used to disguise plastic explosives that were set off with a "pencil-type" detonator on a timer after Ricardo and Lugo got off the plane during a stopover in Barbados. Ricardo "in his own handwriting recorded the steps to be taken before a bomb was placed in an aircraft and how a plastic bomb is detonated," The Archive also released three declassified F.B.I. intelligence reports that were sent to Secretary of State Henry Kissinger after the bombing. The updates, classified "secret" and signed by director Clarence Kelly, focused on the relations between the F.B.I. legal attaché in Caracas, Joseph Leo, Posada, and one of the Venezuelans who placed the bomb on the plane, to whom Leo had provided a visa. One report from Kelly, based on the word of an informant in Venezuela, suggested that Posada had attended meetings in Caracas where the plane bombing was planned. The document also quoted an informant as stating that after the plane went into the ocean one of the bombers placed a call to Orlando Bosch, the leading conspirator in the plot, and stated: "a bus with 73 dogs went off a cliff and all got killed."¹⁵

Another State Department Bureau of Intelligence and Research **report to Kissinger**, noted that the C.I.A. had a source in Venezuela who had overheard Posada saying "we are going to hit a Cuban airplane" and "Orlando has the details" only days before the plane was blown up off the coast of Barbados.

Both Bosch and Posada were arrested and imprisoned in Venezuela after the attack. Posada escaped from prison in September 1985; Bosch was released in 1987 and returned to the United States illegally.¹⁶ Like Posada, immigration authorities detained him; over the objections of the Justice Department, which determined he was a threat to public security, George Herbert Walker Bush's White House issued him an administrative pardon in 1990.

Still-secret intelligence documents cited in the file review released today suggest that the C.I.A. assigned several cryptonyms to Posada when he was working for them, first as an operative and trainer in demolitions and later as an informant based

¹⁴ Kornbluh, Peter. **Bombing of Cuban Jetliner 30 Years Later**
<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB202/index.htm>

¹⁵ Kornbluh, Peter. **Bombing of Cuban Jetliner 30 Years Later**
<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB202/index.htm>

¹⁶ *ibid.*

in the Venezuelan secret police service DISIP. In 1965 he was assigned the codename “AMCLEVE-15.” In 1972 he “was given a new crypt CIFENCE-4,” according to a still-unreleased C.I.A. document, and later referred to as “WKSCARLET-3.”¹⁷

The first report to Secretary of State Kissinger from the State Department’s Bureau of Intelligence and Research on the bombing of Cubana Airlines Flight 455 details Cuba’s allegation that the C.I.A. was involved in the bombing and provides an outline of the suspects’ relationship to the U.S. The report notes that a C.I.A. source had overheard Posada prior to the bombing in late September 1976 stating that, “We are going to hit a Cuban airliner.”¹⁸

The second report to Secretary of State Kissinger from Clarence M. Kelly, director of the F.B.I., provides additional information regarding the relationship between Special Agent Leo and the Cubana Airlines bombing suspects. The report details Leo’s contacts with Lozano and Posada going back to the summer of 1975, and notes that Leo suspected Posada and Hernan Ricardo Lozano of acts of terrorism, but still granted Ricardo’s request for a visa to the United States.¹⁹

5. 4 1998 Havana Hotel Bombings “Justified” by Embargo Logic

As we have seen above, in 1985 Posada escaped from prison in Venezuela where he had been incarcerated for the bombing of flight 455 and became a fugitive from Venezuelan justice at a time when the Venezuelan government was an ally of the United States. He fled to El Salvador using the alias “Ramon Medina” and worked on the illegal contra resupply program run by Lt. Col. Oliver North in the Reagan National Security Council. After the Iran-Contra scandal broke he was unemployed again. In 1998 he was interviewed by Ann Louise Bardach for the New York Times at a non-disclosed location in Aruba and claimed responsibility for a series of hotel bombings in Havana in which eleven people were injured and one Italian tourist was killed. In

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ Kornbluh, Peter. **Bombing of Cuban Jetliner 30 Years Later**
<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB202/index.htm>

¹⁹ *ibid.*

December 2000 he was imprisoned in Panama for plotting to assassinate Fidel Castro and hundreds of others with thirty-three pounds of C-4 plastic explosives during an official state visit. But in September 2004, the president of Panama mysteriously pardoned him and three co-conspirators.

The “justification” for the Havana hotel bombings was that the Cuban tourism industry provided badly needed hard currency to the Castro regime and allowed it to remain in power and oppress its citizens in spite of the unilateral U.S. embargo. So by blowing up hotels and killing Cuba’s European and Canadian sun worshipers, tourism would suffer, weakening the regime and hastening its demise. This is the grotesque logic of the embargo as it has evolved and hardened over the years; from commercial boycott and diplomatic protest to sabotage and cold-blooded terrorism. Posada has been one of the world’s most unremitting purveyors of terrorist violence while American governments both Republican and Democrat have encouraged or tolerated terrorists who shared the U.S. government’s agenda viz. Cuba. President Bush has repeatedly stated that no nation should harbor terrorists and that all nations should work to bring individuals who advocate and employ the use of terror tactics to justice. Now is the time for President Obama and the Congress to reverse decades of de-facto sympathy and support for terrorists who cloak themselves in our flag. Their tactics are incompatible with democratic principles and the human rights that the U.S. is so passionate about. By increasing the threat level to Cuban state security, they, along with the U.S. embargo they insist is the leverage needed to democratize Cuba, make Cuban dissidents’ and reformers’ attempts to change Cuba for the better all but impossible. Any domestic attempt to reduce the Castros’ dictatorial powers is branded as treason against the liberating Cuban Revolution and genuine reformers are prosecuted as Benedict Arnolds and sent to jail. These are the Cuban political prisoners. So the U.S. government strangulation of Cuba economically and its tolerance of terrorism and human trafficking based in Miami have created a permanent state of emergency that makes peaceful political and civic evolution impossible. This is what we have to show for the hundreds of millions of our taxpayer dollars (see embargo timeline below) squandered promoting “regime change.” As Sergei Khrushchev has said, it is not a coincidence that the embargo and Fidel’s rule will be entering their fifth decade together. The Cuban government refuses to issue Sergei Khrushchev a visa to speak in Cuba.

President Obama, you have electrified audiences at home and abroad. You have set new standards for oratory. On September 24, 2007, I was one in a crowd of tens of thousands who gathered to hear you speak at Washington Square Park in New York City. Many in the audience became true believers in you that night. Earlier this year (2008), 200,000 Germans cheered you on as you spoke in Berlin and for the first time

in recent memory, American flags were waved instead of burned upon the visit of a high U.S. government official. President Obama, go to Havana, without preconditions that would allow the Cuban government to object and stop you. Put on a guajiro's hat and greet the Cuban masses under a blazing sun in Revolution Square. Go to the base at the statue of Jose Marti, and deliver a live, uncensored, televised speech as only you know how. Invite Raul Castro to speak freely in the United States in reciprocity. Tell the people of Cuba that the United States will abandon the embargo and normalize relations without preconditions. Explain that the United States remains committed to civil right and civil liberties in Cuba, but will no longer use coercion and will no longer take its Cuba policy marching orders from Miami. Tell the Cuban people that self-employment and small business enterprise is the proven way out of poverty and that the United States stands ready to encourage nascent Cuban entrepreneurs on the condition they remain in Cuba. Shock and awe them by declaring that the Cuban Adjustment Act will no longer be enforced because Cubans who want a better life need to build a more democratic and prosperous Cuba, not immigrate to the United States.. Announce that American businesses may conduct business with Cuban firms and allow the Cuban government to feel victorious about overcoming the embargo and its backers in Miami. Your speech need not last longer than ninety minutes, one fourth of Fidel's typical speech on the virtues of the Revolution and evils of the U.S. when he still had his health.

Follow my prescription and you will achieve what nine presidents before you could not. You will bring change to Cuba without firing a shot, or starving a child, or coddling a terrorist. In one moment you will destroy the status quo and psychology of U.S. Cuba relations and set off a cascade of events the Cuban government will not control. The centralized Cuban economy will dissolve and morph in to a market economy with a large but increasingly irrelevant state sector as private sector wages surpass government salaries.

5.5 Embargo Timeline ²⁰

1960

²⁰ Sierra, JA. **ECONOMIC EMBARGO TIMELINE**

<http://www.historyofcuba.com/history/funfacts/embargo.htm>

March 17. President Eisenhower approves a covert action plan against Cuba that includes the use of a “powerful propaganda campaign” designed to overthrow Castro. The plan includes: a) the termination of sugar purchases b) the end of oil deliveries c) continuation of the arms embargo in effect since mid-1958 d) the organization of a paramilitary force of Cuban exiles to invade the island.

October 19. U.S. imposes a partial economic embargo on Cuba that excludes food and medicine.

1961

September 4. The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 passes in the U.S. Congress. It prohibits aid to Cuba and authorizes the President to create a “total embargo upon all trade” with Cuba.

“The U.S. trade embargo after 1961 had jolting effects. By the early 1960s, conditions in many industries had become critical due to the lack of replacement parts. Virtually all-industrial structures were dependent on supplies and parts now denied to Cuba. Many plants were paralyzed. Havoc followed. Transportation was especially hard hit: the ministry was reporting more than seven thousand breakdowns a month. Nearly one-quarter of all buses were inoperable by the end of 1961. One-half of the 1,400 passenger rail cars were out of service in 1962. Almost three-quarters of the cat-erpillar tractors stood idle due to a lack of replacement parts.”

*Louis A. Pérez, Jr.,
from his book
Cuba, between Reform and Revolution, 2nd Edition Pg. 346*

Luis Posada Carriles had a long relationship with the C.I.A. In February 1961, he joined the C.I.A.’s Brigade 2506 to invade Cuba, although the ship to which he was assigned never landed at the Bay of Pigs. While in the U.S. military between 1963 and 1965 the C.I.A. recruited him and trained him in demolitions; he subsequently became a trainer of other paramilitary exile forces in the mid 1960s. C.I.A. documents in this chapter reveal that he was terminated as an asset in July 1967, but then reinstated four months later and apparently remained an asset until 1974. The documents also show that he remained in contact with the Agency until June 1976, only three months before the plane bombing.

During the time that Posada was on the C.I.A. payroll in the mid-1960s, he participated in a number of plots that involved sabotage and explosives. F.B.I. reporting

recorded some of Posada's earliest activities, including his financial ties to Jorge Mas Canosa, who would later become head of the powerful anti-Castro lobby, the Cuban American National Foundation.

1962

February 7. President Kennedy broadens the partial trade restrictions imposed by Eisenhower to a ban on all trade with Cuba, except for non-subsidized sale of foods and medicines.

March 23. President Kennedy expands the Cuban embargo to include imports of all goods made from or containing Cuban materials, even if made in other countries.

August 1. The Foreign Assistance Act is amended to prohibit aid to "any country" that provides assistance to Cuba.

October 2. The U.S. government cables all Latin American governments and NATO countries new measures to tighten the economic embargo against Cuba. As of today, the transport of U.S. goods is banned on ships owned by companies that do business with Cuba.

1963

February 8. The Kennedy administration prohibits travel to Cuba and makes financial and commercial transactions with Cuba illegal for U.S. citizens.

May 14. The U.S. Department of Commerce announces the requirement of specific approval for exports of all food and medicine to Cuba.

November 17. President Kennedy asks French journalist Jean Daniel to tell Castro that he is now ready to negotiate normal relations and drop the embargo. According to former Press Secretary Pierre Salinger, "If Kennedy had lived I am confident that he would have negotiated that agreement and dropped the embargo because he was upset with the way the Soviet Union was playing a strong role in Cuba and Latin America..."

December. The Foreign Assistance Act is amended to prohibit U.S. aid to countries that continue to trade with Cuba.

December 12. Less than one month after President John F. Kennedy's assassination, U.S. Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy seeks to end the travel ban to Cuba in a memo to Secretary of State Dean Rusk. He refers to the ban as "inconsistent with traditional American liberties," and difficult to enforce. The memo is not released to the public until June 29 2005.

December 13. Robert F. Kennedy's memo of December 12 is discussed at a State Department meeting (to which R.F.K. is not invited) and Undersecretary of State George Ball rules out the possibility of ending the travel ban to Cuba. [The ban continues until 1977 when the Carter Administration opens travel to Cuba by U.S. citizens. The Reagan Administration reinstitutes the ban in 1981.]

1964

February 25. Asked why the U.S. trades with the Soviet Union but not with Cuba, Secretary of State Dean Rusk answers that the Soviet government is a "permanent" government, and the U.S. views Castro as "temporary."

July 26. The Organization of American States (O.A.S.) adopts mandatory sanctions against Cuba, requiring all members to sever diplomatic and trade relations. Only Mexico refuses to comply.

1975

February 9. In a T.V. interview from Mexico City, U.S. Senator Edward M. Kennedy urges the U.S. government to lift the embargo and normalize relations with Cuba. "I believe the idea of isolating Cuba was a mistake," says Kennedy. "It has been ineffective. Whatever the reasons and justifications may have been at the time, now they are invalid."

July 28. The Organization of American States (O.A.S.) votes to end political and economic sanctions against Cuba. This opens the way for each member nation to decide whether to have diplomatic and trade relations with Cuba, which many had already established.

August 21. The U.S. announces that it will allow foreign subsidiaries of U.S.

companies to sell products in Cuba, and that it would no longer penalize other nations for trade with Cuba.

November 15. In Washington, Representative John B. Breaux and senator J. Bennett Johnston Jr., Democrats from Louisiana, argue that it is in the national interest for Louisiana to be allowed to sell rice to Cuba. Mr. Breaux is quoted in the New York Times: "...my constituents say that if the United States can sell grain to the Soviet Union and China, why can't they sell rice to Cuba?"

1976

April 5. U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger states that there is no possibility of U.S. relations with Cuba while Cuban troops are in Africa.

1977

March 19. U.S. President Carter drops the ban on travel to Cuba and on U.S. citizens spending dollars in Cuba.

Wayne Smith, Director of Cuban Affairs at the Department of State under Jimmy Carter: "There were three major fields or issues that had to be addressed before there could be a substantial improvement in relations. Number one: Cuban troops had to begin to leave Africa. Number two: There had to be some improvement in Cuba's human rights performance, and specially in terms of releasing political prisoners. And number three: A reduction in Soviet-Cuban military ties." - From the book: "Cuba, Voices of Change," by Lynn Geldof.

May 25. The U.S. State Department warns that Cuba's recent deployment of military advisors in Ethiopia could "impede the improvement of U.S.-Cuban relations."

1978

February 27. U.S. Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, states that he does not foresee the normalization of relations with Cuba due to the presence of Cuban troops in Africa.

The Carter Administration relaxes laws to allow U.S. residents to send money to relatives in Cuba.

1979

January 1. Cuban-Americans are permitted to visit their families in Cuba. More than 100,000 visit in the coming year.

June 19. In the U.S., Rep. Ted Weiss (D-NY) introduces unsuccessful legislation to end the U.S. trade blockade against Cuba and re-establish diplomatic relations.

1981

January. Ronald Reagan is inaugurated as U.S. President, and institutes the most hostile policy against Cuba since the invasion at Bay of Pigs. Despite conciliatory signals from Cuba, the new U.S. administration announces a tightening of the embargo.

1982

April 19. The Reagan Administration reestablishes the travel ban, prohibits U.S. citizens from spending money in Cuba, and allows the 1977 fishing accord to lapse.

1985

October 4. U.S. President Reagan bans travel to the U.S. by Cuban government or Communist Party officials or their representatives. It also bars most students, scholars, and artists.

1989

November 20. According to new regulations by the U.S. Department of the Treasury, U.S. citizens who travel to Cuba can only spend a maximum of \$100 per day.

1990

October. In alliance with conservative Republicans, Cuban émigrés and the U.S. Congress pass the Mack Amendment, which prohibits all trade with Cuba by subsidiaries of U.S. companies located outside the U.S., and proposes sanctions or cessation of aid to any country that buys sugar or other products from Cuba.

1992

February 5. U.S. Congressman Robert Torricelli introduces the Cuban Democracy Act, and says the bill is designed to “wreak havoc on the island.”

June 15. From an editorial in the NY Times: This misnamed act (the Cuban Democracy Act) is dubious in theory, cruel in its potential practice and ignoble in its election-year expediency... An influential faction of the Cuban American community clamors for sticking it to a wounded regime... There is, finally, something indecent about vociferous exiles living safely in Miami prescribing more pain for their poorer cousins.”

October 15. U.S. Congress passes the Cuban Democracy Act, which prohibits foreign-based subsidiaries of U.S. companies from trading with Cuba, travel to Cuba by U.S. citizens, and family remittances to Cuba. The law allows private groups to deliver food and medicine to Cuba. (At this time, 70% of Cuba’s trade with U.S. subsidiary companies was in food and medicine. Many claim the Cuban Democracy Act is in violation of international law and United Nations resolutions that food and medicine cannot be used as weapons in international conflicts.)

October 23. President Bush signs the Cuban Democracy Act into law. Congressman Torricelli says that it will bring down Castro “within weeks.”

November 24. The United Nations General Assembly votes heavily in favor of a measure introduced by Cuba asking for an end to the U.S. Embargo. The vote is 59 in favor, 3 against (the U.S., Israel and Romania), and 79 abstentions. State Department spokesman Joe Snyder in the LA Times; “The Cuban government, in violation of international law, expropriated billions of dollars worth of private property belonging to U.S. individuals and has refused to make reasonable restitution. The U.S. embargo – and I point out it’s not a blockade - is therefore a legitimate response to the unreasonable and illegal behavior of the Cuban government.”

1993

November 11. The U.N. General Assembly adopts a resolution on the “Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba.” The vote is 88 for the resolution, 4 against, with

47 abstentions.

1994

October 26. For the third year in a row, the United Nations General Assembly votes overwhelmingly for a measure to end the U.S. Embargo of Cuba. The vote is 101-2, with 48 abstentions, and only Israel votes with the U.S.

1995

October 5. The Clinton Administration announces a new people-to-people-contact plan.

November 2. The United Nations General Assembly recommends an end to the embargo (for the fourth consecutive year) by a vote of 117 to 3 (38 abstentions). Only Israel and Uzbekistan join the U.S. in saying no. Since then, each time the vote comes up at the U.N., the number of nations voting against the embargo increases.

1996

March 12. President Clinton signs the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (Libertad) Act (also known as the Helms-Burton Act) which imposes penalties on foreign companies doing business in Cuba, permits U.S. citizens to sue foreign investors who make use of American-owned property seized by the Cuban government, and denies entry into the U.S. to such foreign investors.

July 16. President Clinton suspends enforcement of Title III provisions of the Helms-Burton Act.

November 12. By a vote of 137 to 3, the United Nations General Assembly recommends, for the 5th consecutive year, that the U.S. end the embargo against Cuba.

1997

January 3. President Clinton again suspends enforcement of Title III provisions of the Helms-Burton Act.

February 12. The Clinton Administration approves licenses for U.S. news or-

ganizations to open bureaus in Cuba. (The Cuban government allows only CNN into the island.)

July 16. President Clinton again suspends enforcement of Title III provisions of the Helms-Burton Act.

November 5. For the 6th straight year, the U.N. General Assembly passes a resolution to end the Cuban embargo. The vote is 143 to 3.

1998

January. President Clinton again suspends enforcement of Title III provisions of the Helms-Burton Act.

January 13. In Washington, the organization Americans for Humanitarian Trade with Cuba is formed to promote humanitarian trade with the island.

March 13. In Boston, Roman Catholic Cardinal Bernard Law urges U.S. President Bill Clinton to end the 36-year-old embargo. "It is impossible to reasonably support the embargo against Cuba while at the same time granting Most Favored Nation Status to the People's Republic of China..." says Law.

March 20. U.S. regulations on Cuba are amended as follows:

- U.S. citizens may send up to \$ 1,200 annually to relatives in Cuba.
- Direct passenger flights are permitted, although implementation of these amendments is not immediate.

July 16. President Clinton again suspends enforcement of Title III provisions of the Helms-Burton Act.

July 21. The U.S. Treasury Department denies PWN permission to participate in EXPOCUBA, an exhibition of pharmaceuticals in Cuba.

September 11. After returning home from a visit to Cuba, ex world boxing champ Muhammad Ali calls for an end to the trade embargo against Cuba after pharmaceuticals in Cuba.

October 16. The United Nations General Assembly adopts a resolution against the U.S. embargo on Cuba for the 7th consecutive year. The vote is 157 to end the embargo and 2 (U.S. & Israel) to keep it.

October. The U.S. Treasury Department investigates two U.S. organizations for traveling to Cuba without a license; Global Exchange and Pastors for Peace.

December 6. From Havana, U.S. Senator Christopher Dodd, a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee urges his government to establish a “new conversation for the new millennium” with Cuba.

1999

January. The Clinton administration announces changes to the embargo, which include:

- Sales of some food and agricultural products to private individuals and nongovernmental organizations,
- An increase in the number of charter flights to Cuba,
- Allows anyone (not just Cuban-Americans) to send up to \$ 1,200 per year,
- Allows major league team, the Baltimore Orioles, to arrange two exhibition games, one in Cuba, the other in the U.S., and
- Increases the amount of money a U.S. visitor can spend on the island from \$ 100 per day to \$ 185 per day.

January 16. President Clinton again suspends enforcement of Title III provisions of the Helms-Burton Act.

February 18. Six members of the U.S. Congressional Black Caucus visit Cuba to evaluate the U.S.-imposed embargo. Among the visitors: Maxine Waters and Barbara Lee of California, Sheila Jackson-Lee of Texas, Julia Carson of Indiana and others.

February 23. The coalition of Americans for Humanitarian Trade With Cuba join the United States Association of Former Members of Congress to call on the Clinton administration to end the embargo on food and medicines to Cuba. “The U.S. embargo

on Cuba is the single most restrictive policy of its kind. Even Iraq is able to buy food and medicine from U.S. sources,” says George Fernandez, Executive Director at AHTC. “As a Cuban American, I speak for the vast majority of us who do not think the U.S. should be in the business of denying basic sustenance to families and children in Cuba.”

July 16. President Clinton again suspends enforcement of Title III provisions of the Helms-Burton Act.

November 9. A resolution is passed in the United Nations General Assembly on the need to end the U.S. embargo against Cuba. The vote is 155 in favor and 2 against (U.S. and Israel). This is the 8th time in as many years that the resolution is passed.

2000

January 15. President Clinton again suspends enforcement of Title III provisions of the Helms-Burton Act.

March 17. U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright announces the first easing of sanctions on Iran (which began in 1979 after students seized the U.S. embassy in Tehran). “We’re looking for ways to respond to changes in Iran,” said State Department spokesman James B. Foley, “and to advance prospects for a better relationship. It is something that is under consideration - how to best respond.”

May 7. In a more symbolic than legal decision, Cuban courts order the U.S. to pay \$121 billion in damages for the 4-decade-long embargo. A similar lawsuit in November 1999 found the U.S. government liable for deaths and damage from “aggressive policies towards Cuba,” in the amount of \$181 billion. Observers content that both lawsuits came about in response to a ruling by a U.S. federal judge in Miami ordering Cuba to pay \$187 million to families of pilots shot down by Cuban fighter planes in 1996.

October 19. At a meeting of the International Chamber of Commerce, American businessman and ICC Vice-President Richard D. McCormick, calls for an end to the U.S. trade embargo of Cuba. “...embargoes don’t work,” said McCormick. “They are counterproductive; they just hurt the people who are in the least position to help themselves. I think that after 38 years it is time for this embargo to be ended. Unilateral sanctions don’t work.” (Mr. McCormick serves on the boards of UAL Corporation (United Airlines), Wells Fargo and Company, United Technologies Corporation, and Concept Five Technologies.)

November 9. The U.N. General Assembly passes a Cuban-drafted resolution calling for an end to the U.S.-Cuba embargo. The vote is 167 in favor, 3 against, and 4 abstentions. Voting with the U.S. against the resolution are the Marshall Islands and Israel.

November 29. A twenty-three member task force in the U.S., made up of liberals and conservatives, calls for an end to the embargo to “help the island’s transition to a post-Castro era and reduce the chances of U.S. military intervention.”

2001

April 18. In Washington, the Cuba Policy Foundation releases a poll in which a majority of Americans are said to support the idea of doing business with Cuba and allowing travel to the island. Most agree with the decision to reunite Elián González with his father in Cuba.

August 23. Organizers of the Latin Grammy Awards announce that they will change the location of this year’s event from Miami to Los Angeles fearing violent protests from anti-communist exiles.

November 28. For the 10th consecutive time the United Nations votes to condemn the 4-decade-old trade embargo by a vote of 167 to 3, with three nations abstaining. Voting for the embargo: U.S., Israel and the Marshall Islands.

November 30. The U.S. government turns down a Cuban offer to compensate Americans for properties confiscated by the Revolution 40 years ago.

2002

April 5. In Philadelphia, Canadian businessman James Sabzali is found guilty of violating the U.S. embargo against Cuba.

May 13. From Havana’s Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, Jimmy Carter says:

“With some degree of reluctance I would also like to comment on the allegation of bioterrorism. I do this because these allegations were made maybe not coincidentally just before our visit to Cuba. In preparation for this unprecedented visit, I requested, and we all received, intense briefings from the State Department, the intelligence agencies of my country, and high officials in the White House. One purpose of this briefing was for them to share with us any concerns that my government had about possible terrorist activities that were supported by Cuba. There were absolutely no such allegations made or questions raised. I asked them specifically on more than one occasion is there any evidence that Cuba has been involved in sharing any information to any other country on Earth that could be used for terrorist purposes. And the answer from our experts on intelligence was ‘no.’

I think it’s very significant though that this allegation was made, and I’m grateful for a chance to come here at the center of this effort on behalf of Cuba.”

June. Matt Welch writes in Foul Ball (Reason Online), “Even though the [Cuban] people are generally smart and jaded enough to tune out the government’s propaganda, they don’t have much of anything to replace it with, except for the odd B.B.C. broadcast-and contact with foreign tourists. Every conversation with an American about the U.S. undermines Fidel Castro by definition, because it surely contradicts the banal lies he and his media mouth on a daily basis.”

July 23. In Washington, the U.S. House of Representatives votes 262 to 167 to end the travel ban and allow the sale of American goods to Cuba. 73 Republicans vote against the embargo.

July 28. From an editorial in the New York Daily News:

“...slowly but surely, the tide is turning in favor of lifting travel and trade sanctions against Cuba. More and more Republicans are not willing to let the larger interests of the U.S. and their own constituents be sacrificed to the gods of electoral politics.” As Rep. Jeff Flake, the Arizona Republican who led the effort to repeal the travel ban, said: “This is all about freedom. Our government shouldn’t tell us where to travel and where not to travel.”

July 29. From an editorial in the Boston Herald:

“The more travelers there are (to Cuba) the more the truth will spread, and that can only help the transition of Cuba out of tyranny when the tyrant dies.”

August 7. In Washington, House Majority Leader Dick Armey (R-Texas) says the U.S. should open trade with Cuba.

August 7. From an editorial in the Boston Globe:

“As for human rights, opening travel and trade to the island would improve the monitoring of human rights abuses and expose more Cubans to American values. Bush ought to put the interests of both Cubans and Americans before his domestic political needs.”

November 13. For the eleventh straight year, the U.N. General Assembly overwhelmingly approves a resolution asking the U.S. to end the 40-plus-years embargo against Cuba. The vote is 173 in favor of the resolution and 3 against (U.S., Israel, Marshall Islands), with no abstentions. European nations expressed objection to the embargo, citing U.S. penalties on countries and companies doing business with Cuba as “extraterritorial,” and saying that the embargo is a bilateral issue between the U.S. and Cuba and should not be imposed on others.

According to an article in the Christian Science Monitor (10/23/03) about 180,000 U.S. citizens visited Cuba in 2002.

2003

March 12. U.S. Senators Max Baucus (D-MT) and Chuck Hagel (R-NE) introduce a bill in Congress (United States-Cuba Trade Act of 2003) that seeks to lift the embargo.

March 12. Stephan Vitvitsky writes in Tufts Daily; “... the Cold War ended in 1991 when the Soviet Union ceased to exist. There is no more communist threat and the United States is the lone superpower of the world. So the embargo does not make sense in the post-Cold War world as it has outlived one of its main objectives by twelve years, quarantining countries allied with the Soviet Union.”

March 21. Ten U.S. Senators from both political parties form the “Cuba Working Group,” to promote an end to the embargo against Cuba. Members include Max Baucus, Democrat from Montana, and Pat Roberts, a Republican from Kansas. “We believe that the American people can have greater influence on Cuban society by developing a relationship with the Cuban people,” the senators say in a letter to senate leaders.

September 15. The U.S. House of Representatives approve a bill ending travel restrictions to Cuba for U.S. citizens. The bill, authored by Jeff Flake, wins by a vote of 227 to 188. [Like similar bills on the embargo passed by the House, this one will die in the Senate.]

October 20. About fifty U.S. travel industry executives spend the day in Cuba to consider “future business potential.” At the end of the day they return to a resort in Cancun, Mexico, where the first U.S.-Cuba travel conference is held.

September 30. The U.S. Treasury Department’s Office for Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) passes a regulation that bans publication of scientific articles from regimes subject to sanctions by the U.S. government, as is Cuba. (The measure is repealed on April 5, 2004)

October 10. U.S. President George W. Bush establishes the Committee for Assistance to a Free Cuba, and further enforces the ban on travel to the island.

October 24. The U.S. Senate votes (59 to 36) in favor of lifting the ban on travel to Cuba. The result is similar to a vote at the House of Representatives last month. This is a major “rebuff” of President Bush’s policy towards Cuba. (The travel ban was introduced by President John F. Kennedy in 1963.)

November 4. The U.N. General Assembly votes overwhelmingly against the U.S. economic embargo of Cuba for the 12th consecutive year. Only three nations vote for the embargo: the U.S., Israel and the Marshall Islands.

2004

February 26. U.S. President Bush signs Presidential Proclamation 7757, which bans vessels from traveling to Cuban ports from U.S. ports.

April 30. According to a letter sent by the U.S. Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) to the U.S. Congress late last year (and now provided to the Associated Press) the Treasury Department had four full-time employees dedicated to investigating Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein, and over two dozen assigned to investigating Cuban Embargo violations.

The letter reveals that over \$8 million were collected in embargo violation fines since 1994, and over 10,683 “enforcement investigations” opened since 1990. Relating to terrorism, the OFAC opened 93 “enforcement investigations” between 1990 and 2003.

October 28. For the 13th consecutive year, the U.N. General Assembly votes overwhelmingly against the U.S. embargo on Cuba. The vote is 179 to 4, with one abstention. Voting with the U.S. for the embargo are Israel, Palau and the Marshall Islands. In the only speech loudly applauded on the assembly floor, Cuba’s Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque states: “The U.S. government has unleashed a world wide genocidal economic war against Cuba. It is the government of a large and mighty empire, but it is afraid of the example of a small rebellious island.”

December 16. A number of U.S. lawmakers and food firms meet in Havana. By the end of the week, Cuba has agreed to purchase about \$125 million in farm goods from U.S. companies.

2005

June 21. The U.S. House of Representatives Appropriations Committee approves an amendment that rolls back a rule issued by the Treasury Department last February that requires that Cuba pay for food imports from the U.S. before they leave port. The full House and Senate must approve the amendment before it becomes law.

June 29. The National Security Archive releases a memo written by Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy on December 12 1963 (less than a month after President Kennedy’s assassination), in which he seeks to lift the travel ban to Cuba. He refers to the ban as “inconsistent with traditional American liberties.” Also released is a memo about a December 13 1963 meeting at the State Department (to which Kennedy was not invited), in which Undersecretary of State George Ball rules out the possibility of ending the travel ban.

November 8. For the 14th straight year, the U.N. General Assembly votes to end the U.S. embargo against Cuba. The vote is 182 in favor, 4 against (U.S., Israel, the Marshall Islands, Palau) and 1 abstention (Micronesia).

2006

July 11. U.S. President G.W. Bush approves \$80 million to be used for “boosting democracy in Cuba.” The fund is the result of proposals from a commission (members of which include Condoleezza Rice and Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez) exploring “U.S. policy towards Cuba after the eventual death of Fidel Castro.” The Cuban government refers to this as an “act of aggression,” and Cuban dissident-journalist Oscar Espinosa Chepe considers the fund “...counterproductive. I believe Cubans have to be the ones who love our problems and any interference serves to complicate the situation,” he says.

November 8. For the 15th straight year in a row, the U.N. General Assembly votes overwhelmingly on a resolution to demand an end of the U.S. embargo against Cuba. The vote is 183 in favor of the resolution (to end the embargo) and 4 against, with the nation of Micronesia abstaining. Voting with the U.S. is Israel, the Marshall Islands and Palau.

2007

March 1. U.S. Senator Michael B. Enzi introduces the “Freedom to Travel to Cuba Act” on the floor of the senate: “If you keep on doing what you have always been doing,” he says, “you are going to wind up getting what you already got. ...We are not hurting the Cuban government; we are hurting the Cuban people. ...It is time for a different policy.”

2008

May 23. Presidential candidate Obama says he is *in favor of rolling back restrictions on Cuban American travel and remittances to Cuba* at a speech in Miami in front of the Cuban American National Foundation audience. This is a bold move with much political risk that has not been done by any serious presidential candidate in history.

November 4. Obama wins the White House as I predicted in my 2007 book, “Why Obama Will Win in 2008 & 2012.” See [www. WhytheDemocratswillwinin2008.com](http://www.WhytheDemocratswillwinin2008.com) to get a free copy.

2009

February 10 *President Obama announces that he will attend the Fifth Summit of the Americas* in Trinidad and Tobago on April 17 -19, 2009. This effectively sets a deadline for the President to formulate a comprehensive Latin America policy that will most likely have to include some action with regards to U.S. policy towards Cuba.

February 26. U.S. House of Representatives passes HR1 105 Omnibus Appropriations bill that *contains language that will restrict OFAC enforcement of Cuban American travel and remittances to Cuba* along with language to suspend the “cash in advance” payment structure that requires Cuba to pay U.S. agriculture sellers in advance of shipment.

March 2. *Raul Castro announces a major reorganization of the Cuban government* where Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque and Vice President of Council of State are fired. The character of the Cuban government after Raul leaves the scene becomes clearer.

March 11. After some political wrangling, the *Senate passes the Ominbus spending bill* that will continue to fund U.S. government operations but contains controversial language that is a small step towards easing the restrictions of Cuba sanctions. Senator Menendez objects to having the Cuba language in the bill but eventually supports the bill as Treasury Secretary Geithner sends him a letter stating that the language will not substantially change U.S. Cuba trade laws. Senator Menendez can see the writing on the wall that the momentum is building against the Embargo.

March 16. Brazil’s President Lula, who is well respected by the U.S., Cuba, Venezuela and other Latin American countries, meets with President Obama in the White House *then gives a speech in New York calling on the U.S. to reconsider U.S. Cuba policy.* This meeting may have been scheduled in advance of the Summit of the Americas so the two Presidents could develop a working relationship and perhaps even discuss Cuba in order to formulate talking points before, during and after the Summit.

March 17. Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez “fires the first shot” at Obama before they meet at the Summit of the Americas next month. *Chavez challenges President Obama to discuss Cuba* before and during the Summit.

March 18. New Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez made a statement that *Cuba would work with the European Union to discuss human rights violations* and would work with the E.U. to normalize relations.

March 19. *Costa Rica and El Salvador, where the leftist FMLN has just won a national election, both announce that they will normalize relations with Cuba.* It appeared to be coincidental that the decision was made public on the same day that Salvadoran President-elect Mauricio Funes reiterated his campaign pledge to re-establish relations with Havana made the comments hours before he was to meet with U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Thomas Shannon.

March 26. Republican Congressman Jerry Moran from Kansas introduced *Bill (HR 1737), Agricultural Export Facilitation Act of 2009*. It is designed to facilitate the sale of United States agricultural products to Cuba, as authorized by the Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act of 2000.

March 30. U.S. Senators Byron Dorgan (D-ND), Michael Enzi (R-WY), Myron Brilliant from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, President of the American Farm Bureau Federation Bob Stallman and Human Rights Watch Executive Director Jose Miguel Vivanco will hold a press conference Tuesday, March 31, at 12:00 p.m. in room SVC-203 of the United States Capitol Visitors Center in support of S428, the Freedom to Travel to Cuba Act.



**The author using a 100 year-old,
functional telephone.
Notice the tape holding
the earpiece together.
Callejon Hamil, centro Habana**



**1958 Ford
Edsel
wedding
rental car**



AFTER RAUL

In Cuba today there is no propertied class in the proper sense, nor is there a middle-class. Even the Castro clan's large land holdings were nationalized in the early 1960s, leading Alina Ruz to publicly declare Fidel "my shameless son." There is a managerial/military Brahman bureaucratic caste, answerable to Raul Castro that exercises decision-making power over all matters of importance. Members of this elite did not achieve their status through business acumen or inherited wealth, but through loyalty and appointment. The caste's power will grow as Fidel, the consummate micro-manager, slowly fades away and is replaced by Raul, who prefers to delegate authority. After Raul their power will expand again and the pressure to monetize their authority could lead to de-facto ownership and a nascent market economy from the top down, creating a *nouveau riche cubaine*. This would be the beginning of the end of the Cuban Revolution. The Castros' top priority, from the grave, will be to prevent this from occurring. Large state enterprise in the agricultural and other sectors will continue to dominate the brick and mortar economy because it is less lucrative than trade and banking, and tends to be outright un-profitable and in dire need of investment. Cuban state power serves as a bulwark against foreign power of every stripe and the military is the key to state power in Cuba post Raul Castro. The productivity of Cuban enterprise will remain low, ensuring the low purchasing power of the majority and reliance on the discipline and coercion of military structures in the economy. Large-multinational manufacturers will open shop in Cuba, attracted to low wages and proximity to the world's largest consumer market after the embargo is lifted.

This scenario coupled with fear of U.S. and exile domination, would be fertile ground for a populist to take charge. A new Fidel could succeed by replacing ideology with religion and playing up egalitarianism, nativism and anti-Americanism. There

could be nostalgia for Fidel if foreign finance and culture were to dominate Cuba post Raul.

Illicit opportunities for self-enrichment on the side are the primary current material benefit of membership in the Brahmin caste. These opportunities are sought out due to the dearth of market incentives, morbidity of the peso economy and wide acceptance of filching and corruption. Pilfering is rife. The work ethic has broken down and a money fetish holds sway. It is at the root of the crass materialism common in today's Cuba and in post-Soviet Russia. This phenomenon is totally incompatible with the morality required to maintain Socialist ideals and guarantees the end of the Cuban Revolution.

The privilege achieved by the Brahman caste, and the fear of its loss, ensures resistance to Miami exile power. The caste will wrap itself up in nativism, not just nationalism, which exiles have a claim to. Since the caste cannot match the compensatory power of Miami, the condign power of the state will be its defense against foreign (including Cuban exile) domination. Hence a strong state sector after Raul. Military rule is most likely.

Today the state sector under Raul faces major morale problems. How well he solves the inherent structural weaknesses of the command economy will determine how many options are available once he passes away. For example, take Iris. Iris is 27 years old and has never held a job. She is not alone. Many Cubans simply do not work.

Years of token salaries and universal government subsidies keep many young people off the labor rolls because it's more lucrative to hustle. Others live comfortably enough off money sent from Miami and elsewhere. The destructive sociological effect bears similarities to what we saw in the United States under welfare.

Iris, a young Cuban girl, turns down neighborhood janitor positions in hopes of higher-paying work at nearby resort hotels where she can earn tips in CUCs.

"I am not going to tell you something different. There are jobs here in Cárdenas where I live. Doing what? Cleaning hospitals for 150 pesos [\$7] a month. For 150 pesos, I would rather stay home with my kid. I am willing to work really hard – but not for nothing in return."

Cuba struggles to increase productivity while hundreds of thousands of people, if not millions, are not motivated to take work seriously. The dilemma is one of the profound systemic difficulties Raul faces as he tries to create a "modern socialist economy."

The government says there are plenty of jobs – just low-paying ones Cubans won't take. Even highly educated people would rather remain idle or work in the tourist industry as waiters or taxi drivers than work as professionals requiring brainpower. This has led to a profound disrespect for serious professions that make a country more competitive.

Iris says she has blanketed all the state agencies that run tourist resorts near her home with résumés, but she lacks the high school diploma required for even menial work. So she spends most days hanging out in front of her house, watching horse-drawn buggies go by in her hometown of Ciudad Bandera, where the national flag was first raised on May 19, 1850.

“If Raúl Castro wants to crack down on people who do not work, then he should offer real jobs” Don't you think people would prefer to have independence, to have something they can be proud of?”

Officially, Cuban government figures show its unemployment rate is just 1.9 percent, the lowest in Latin America. At the same time, government statistics show that only 4.8 million of the 6.7 million work force is “economically active.” That yields a de facto unemployment rate of nearly 30%. My personal observations of Havana during normal business hours support this assertion. A 2007 survey conducted by Juventud Rebelde, a government newspaper, showed that in Guantánamo province alone there were 18 times more unemployed people than official figures reflected.

The National Bureau of the Young Communists League says 90 percent of unemployed youths would like to go to school or work if they found “acceptable options.”

6. 1 Labor statistics

According to Granma, the Communist party newspaper:

- 20 % of the working-age population in Havana is unemployed.
- Nearly half of them turn down jobs when they are offered.
- 17 percent of the more than 17,000 recent technical school graduates did not show up for the jobs they were offered. Another 200 of them stopped coming in after a few months.

“Unfortunately there is not an inconsiderable segment of our society that wants to live without working and considers that through the black market, it will have everything by living off of others,” Granma editor Lázaro Barredo wrote in a 2008 editorial.

When Raúl Castro took office on Feb. 24, 2008, he announced an increase in state pensions and wages. In April, economic commentator Ariel Terrero announced on state television that the government would lift caps on wages. I suspect that very few Cubans understand that real wages can rise only if productivity rises.

“For the first time, it is clearly and precisely stated that a salary does not have a limit, that a salary depends solely on productivity,” Terrero said. He added that he did not view this as a violation of egalitarianism, but rather, as Lenin put it, “from each according to his ability, to each according to his work.”

By U.S. Department of Labor standards many unemployed Cubans would not be considered unemployed because they are discouraged and are not actively seeking work. The dual currency system is the major problem. The state pays salaries in nearly worthless pesos (recently some jobs have started paying a hard currency bonus) and sells most consumer goods, even those produced in Cuba, in the Cuban Convertible Peso (CUC), which is a Cuban paper proxy for the Euro, U.S. Dollar, British Pound and Swiss Franc.

In an interview, Eduardo, 30, a stagehand who got his first job in 2004, said most of his friends worked for the first time when they were in their late twenties -- after emigrating to Florida.

“Why should I go to work? The money they would pay me is not going to meet my basic needs,” he said. “My mother in Orlando sent me \$100 a month, and with that I was set.”

Sadly, the erosion of the work ethic will have a negative impact on Cuban productivity for the foreseeable future.

Calls to be like Che and sacrifice for the greater good cannot substitute for concrete incentives, especially when there is dire want but no glory or immortality to be had for the heroic effort. The lack of incentives in Cuba’s economy explains the coercive nature of the government and ascension of the military.

At the height of the Cold War, Cuba’s soldiers became a legend in Africa and on the island when they punched through enemy lines, defeating South Africa’s army in Angola. Today, Cuban generals are attempting to apply the profit motive to businesses that range from growing beans to running hotels and airlines. The result is an awkward

system of production and distribution.

Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR) rent rooms to tourists through Gaviota SA, the island's fastest-growing hotel conglomerate. They sell premium cigars, peddle consumer goods through an island-wide retail chain and serve lobster dinners at the Divina Pastora restaurant in Havana's landmark Morro Castle. The military also plays a role in allotting nickel mines and leasing offshore ocean lots for oil exploration. The U. of Miami's Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies estimates that the FAR control more than 60 percent of the island's economy. I agree with this assessment.

Raul has traveled to China numerous times to study Beijing's economic policies and in 2003 he invited the leading economic adviser to then Chinese premier Zhu Rongji, who played a leading role in opening up China to foreign trade and investment, to give a series of lectures in Cuba. Fidel, who deeply opposed reforms, was a notable no-show.

In the 1990s, Cuba sent its military officers, who had previously trained at prestigious Soviet military schools, to learn hotel management in Spain and accounting in Europe, Latin America, Asia, and Canada. Upwardly mobile officers burnt the midnight oil reading business books such as "In Search of Excellence" by Tom Peters and Robert H. Waterman.

As Defense Minister, Raul Castro adopted standard accounting and management incentives to run military-owned factories that made everything from uniforms to bullets. In some cases, workers were given modest bonuses. The reforms are known as *perfeccionamiento empresarial*, loosely translated as "entrepreneurial improvement." The government cautiously courted foreign capital and invited foreign entrepreneurs to jumpstart the economy.

The experiments sometimes flopped. In 1998, a Spanish businessman started a travel agency and hydroponics vegetable farm inside the vast helicopter hangar at a former submarine base in the port of Mariel. The farm proved short-lived because Aerogaviota, the transport company belonging to the Cuban army, was unreliable. It shipped only a few loads of produce; the rest was left behind to rot. The Spaniard found it impossible to coordinate Cuban labor with unpredictable transport flights. This episode is typical of business in Cuba.

According to retired American diplomat Philip Peters, now a director of the Lexington Institute, by the year 2000 approximately 1,400 state companies out of 3,000 were being evaluated for or being run under *perfeccionamiento* management techniques. Using such methods tripled profits in just two years for a tire plant, according to the manager who spoke to Peters in 2001. As Cuban enterprise gains in productivity through *perfeccionamiento*, the groundwork is laid for market reform in the future.

The military found foreign joint-venture partners for Cuba's moribund citrus industry, which collapsed after losing its markets in the Soviet bloc. With citrus being

one of Cuba's most important exports, the joint venture with Grupo BM, an Israeli firm that operates a 115,000 acre grapefruit farm with state-of-the-art drip irrigation techniques, has become Cuba's most important citrus company. Ironically, the Israeli government, unable to say no to its benefactor in Washington, is one of only four nations to vote in favor of the U.S. embargo when the U.N. General Assembly roundly condemns it every year.

6.2 Fidel's About Face

I remember the hope that Cubans and foreign businessmen felt at that time. There was an endless whirl of conferences, expos, trade shows, and trade agreements. I attended one such conference in February 2003, which featured presentations by Senators Maria Cantwell (D-WA) and Kent Conrad (D-ND). Alamar Associates, trade consultants specializing in Cuba since 1974, had organized the U.S.-Cuba Agricultural Conference. Alamar, headed by Kirby Jones, negotiates contracts to sell agricultural and food products to Cuba, obtains travel licenses from the U.S. Government and arranges visits to Cuba, which require a special Treasury license.

During a meeting at Havana's Palacio de Convenciones, Fidel Castro himself unexpectedly dropped by, spoke for hours about agriculture and commodity prices and then took live questions from the audience. It was an exciting moment. I sat in the second row, three meters from Castro, and was called on to speak. I remember how the distinguished panel, including the senators, Kirby Jones, and top Cuban government ministers, not to mention the Cuban security men, held their breath as I spoke. No one knew what I, an unknown young man in suit and tie, might say to el Comandante. Security had already been staring at me and I know what everyone was thinking: Is he Cuban-American? Will he say something inflammatory?

"Given the shortage of food in Cuba and rising food prices worldwide, would Cuba adapt Chinese-style economic reforms," I asked.

Fidel's long-winded, circuitous answer was that comparisons between the two countries could not be made, Cuba already had its agrarian reform in the 1960s and farmers' markets were currently open. There would be no reform. I captured the



Photo taken by author



The author (right) with an executive from Archer Daniels Midland (center)

exchange between us on video and thought about the desperate woman who had accosted me on a Havana street, terrified the police would catch her selling vegetables out of a brown paper bag.

Fidel meant what he said. In 2003, he reversed the business opening, arguing that they were sully the revolution. By 2004, Cuba's economy had turned a corner and Fidel canceled business and management courses funded by the European Union, Sweden, and Canada, which together trained more than 1,300 high-ranking Cuban officials in capitalist management techniques. As a result, free trade zones vanished, self-employment was curtailed and joint ventures were put on hold indefinitely.

As of 2008, Cuba conducts \$2 billion annually in oil barter for medical care with Venezuela, and China invests heavily in Cuban nickel mines. Tourism receipts, remittances from abroad, and pharmaceutical and cigar exports comprise the economy's remaining components. All are state-driven.

6.3 The Military's Role

For ideological and political reasons, Cuba effectively abstains from the world economy when the U.S. embargo does not accomplish this for it. The inevitable result is autarky, a subsistence economy, no savings and public dependency on the state. I am not suggesting that the Castros secretly want the U.S. embargo to continue or want to keep the Cuban people impoverished. They don't, and an end to the U.S. embargo in their lifetime would be a huge political triumph for them. Once the initial euphoria wears off, it would also be the beginning of the end of the political system they built. The current Castroite system needs monopolistic control as well as conflict and controversy to keep it from going soft. This is not a value judgment. The Castroite system is incompatible with, fearful and mistrustful of the decentralized, impersonal, corporate power that could pose a challenge to it if given a toehold in Cuba. An analogy would be the uneasy feeling many American communities have towards Wal-Mart. I do not think the Castroite system is without its merits and rationale, but it belongs to an earlier time, just like the embargo. Barriers are an anachronism. Theory

needs to catch up with reality. One group unlikely to bring up these questions is the military.

The Cuban military, as the obedient servant of state power and with the ability to command and control without ownership, has expanded its sphere of influence. Today, the military's web of companies is run by the Grupo de Administracion Empresarial SA, or the Business Administration Group, which is located on the fourth floor of Cuba's defense ministry building. Known by its Spanish acronym GAESA, the group was headed by Gen. Julio Casas Regueiro until he became defense minister on February 18, 2008, the day Raul succeeded Fidel. Raul Castro's son-in-law, Col. Luis Alberto Rodriguez, was the group's deputy head.

By turning officers' clubs and naval bases into resorts, the tourism company Gaviota, which means sea gull, has become GAESA's most important business. They control the best hotels but leave management to Spain's Sol Melia and France's Club Med. Of Cuba's roughly 40,000 hotel rooms, Gaviota's currently has approximately 8,500.

Retired Col. Hal Klepak, Canada's former military attaché in Havana, has written a book on the Cuban military. According to Col. Klepak, Gaviota also runs Aerogaviota (mentioned above). For military enthusiasts who wish to visit the island's colonial forts and the barren land that surrounds the U.S. naval base in Guantanamo, Gaviota offers exclusive tours. It also rents cars, runs marinas, manages gourmet restaurants and operates an attraction that allows tourists to swim with dolphins, according to a recent study by the Spanish Institute of International Trade.

Generals hold the top management slots in the country's economic ministries. Cuba's ex-sugar czar, Gen. Ulises Rosales del Toro, shut down two-thirds of Cuba's approximately 156 antique sugar mills in 2002. The country is still trying to revive production, which reached a 100-year historic low of 1.3 million tons in 2006. In addition to Gen. Rosales del Toro, other generals run the civil aviation, fishing, telecommunications and transportation ministries. A colonel runs Habanos SA, a joint venture with the Spanish firm Altadis, which markets the country's famous cigars abroad. Another colonel runs the tourism ministry.

Mark Entwistle, a former Canadian ambassador to Havana who now advises foreign companies in Cuba, has said the military has the power to cut the bureaucratic red tape that bedevils other Cuban entities. For example, a Canadian business that wanted to grow soybeans was unable to get permission from the ministry of agriculture. But once the Canadians approached the military, the red tape vanished. "The military has a whole unit devoted to doing joint ventures in agriculture," says Mr. Entwistle. "There was zero ideological content, it was 100 percent business."

Giving the armed forces a critical role in running the economy has helped the Castro brothers reward their supporters and gives the military a stake in the status quo.

But it has also opened a corrupting influence in the military that could worsen if the military's role expands further in a post-Raul Cuba. A number of high-ranking "entrepreneur soldiers" have already been discharged and are often jailed for corruption.

The military also faces internecine rivalry within the ranks. Many officers envy fellow soldiers involved in joint ventures and covet their superior living standards.

Ricardo Pascoe, former Mexican ambassador in Havana, warns of a new elite: the "juniors" -- sons of senior military officers who stationed abroad. They enjoy privileges undreamt of by ordinary Cubans. During his time in Havana from 2001 to 2003, many Mexican businessmen complained to him that the "juniors" were demanding bribes and kickbacks as a condition of doing business with their fathers.

6.4 Economic Reforms in 2009

In March 2009, the Cuban leadership replaced eight ministers and several top officials and brought armed forces generals, former officers and middle-aged Communist Party officials into the cabinet. The most notable dismissals included Carlos Lage, widely credited with saving the country after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and Felipe Perez Roque, a likely successor to Raul. These moves leave little doubt that the military will take power on Raul's demise. They may also reflect Fidel Castro's infamous paranoia. The fact that Fidel was consulted before the firings is evidence of his continued power, even from a hospital bed.

At the same time, Raul has loosened controls on how state companies spend foreign currency. He cancelled a decree requiring the Central Bank to approve all state company expenditures in excess of \$10,000. Business leaders are relieved and said the change would benefit the entire economy by reducing bureaucratic delays and paperwork. They believe that manufacturing, tourism and agriculture will improve.

The 2003 decree was originally enforced at the behest of Fidel Castro to fight corruption. It was part of the re-imposition of rigid control after the loosening of the 1990s to cope with deep economic crisis. Raul Castro, 77, by bringing trusted military

officers and other allies into his cabinet, is setting the stage for his own succession.

Cuba's economy was battered by three hurricanes in 2008, drops in commodity export prices and the global financial crisis. In one year, Cuba's current account went from a \$500 million surplus to a deficit of more than \$2 billion.

Since taking office last year, Raul Castro has taken small but symbolic steps such as lifting restrictions on some consumer goods and rescinding tourist hotels' exclusion of Cubans. He has also decentralized agriculture, granted producers more autonomy and lifted income caps, declaring that workers and farmers should maximize their income. As Deng Xiao Ping famously said as China abandoned the Soviet economic model and created a mixed economy in the 1980s, "it matters not whether a cat is black or white, as long as it catches mice."

After Fidel's death, Raul, assuming he is in good health, will accelerate economic reforms and liberalization. Cuba will be more pragmatic. China will be its role model because of enviable growth statistics. But the Cuban state will resist the formation of a moneyed elite outside its own ranks. At some point in the future, Cuba will no longer be able to resist, though the exclusion of exile money and personalities will be a more achievable priority.

After Raul, a disciplined group of senior army officers will likely rule Cuba in collective fashion. They will have command over the economy and political life, and the security services will clamp down very heavily. At some point, a new personality will emerge to critique Fidel and Raul's "errors." The new leadership will decree further loosening of economic restrictions on small-scale Cuban enterprise and foreign investment and will seek rapprochement with the United States. The government will commute political prisoners' sentences but will not permit organized political opposition. Cubans will not accept American-style elections and the Cuban government would be suicidal to accept them.

6.5 What Washington Should Do Now

If the United States normalizes relations without insisting on elections as a

pre-condition, politics in Cuba will have to fast-forward toward a more democratic arrangement because the state of emergency will be over, it will appear the Cubans have “won,” and the population will no longer abide by strict limitations and restrictions imposed on civil and economic life. If the U.S. posture remains hostile, i.e. the embargo, and there is a credible threat that Cuba will be taken over by Miami exiles, then the Cuban government will maintain its character.

After Raul, U.S. policy must remain decoupled from Florida politics. This does not imply that the U.S. should wait for him to die before changing its posture. That foolish strategy failed with Fidel. Raul will not leave his succession to chance either and his replacement will not make the changes Washington seeks.

The time to engage Cuba is now. This means not just sitting down to chat, as Obama said he would during the election campaign, but the normalization of relations with a country with whom we are not at war. By engaging Raul now, his successors will have to continue the process from day one. American policy makers must not be misled into believing that somehow, after the Castro lineage is finished, the Cuban government will back down or be overthrown, as if Cuba were a monarchy or tin-pot dictatorship. Nationalism predates the Castros and will thrive after the Castros are dead. American policymakers must not be seduced by the Miami-Cuban fantasy of turning back the clock to 1959 and taking over. That is the road to Cuban civil war, a war that Miami will lose.

The time to engage Cuba is now. Only this way can we influence what happens in Cuba instead of reacting to one fait accompli after another.

AFTERWORD

The original 1957 blonde bedroom set of the Havana Hotel Riviera, approved by the late mafioso Meyer Lansky, was still doing duty on the eve of a futuristic sounding decade: 2010. Generous dresser drawers and nightstands with George Jetson's version of the future accouterments were separated by a headboard that would bear tales of affairs and loss if it could only accept an offer that could not be refused and spill its cedar guts.

But a more vexing story of benign neglect and decay was the real headliner. Moth heaven musty closets, rancid midnight blue carpets with a penchant for obscuring stains and moldy walls that smack you in the face; dank clothes drawers, unruly and fetid curtains blown indoors by the sea breeze, a cheap mattress and torn lampshades brown with water stains... It was enough to make you hold your breath while paring back the bed sheets to see what else might be revealed. Years ago I heard a rumor that J. Lo her trademark rear end insured for a billion dollars (no joke), would not sleep on a hotel bed with sheets and blankets less than a certain regal thread count. Here on the "executive floor" of Lansky's erstwhile Caribbean jewel, it was a relief just to find that the bed linen was cum stain free. I chuckled and recalled the coarse remarks the Jewish capo purportedly made when Ginger Rogers was whisked down to Havana from Hollywood, for the hotel's opening gala, broadcast live on American television: "she can wiggle her ass, but can't sing worth a goddamn note."

The Hale Old Man and the Septic Tank

Cuba and Haiti are both nearly on the Tropic of Cancer, which means it is always warm or hot. Good 75 degree Fahrenheit water in the Gulf of Mexico is what is needed for a big blow... That is how Katrina was spawned... but I digress. I write these

lines a few day shy of the Winter Solstice -and a monster snowstorm hovers over the eastern seabord of the U.S. The same cold front is churning up high winds and from my perch I can see good thirty miles out. Presently the azure waters in front of the Havana Malecon will have turned U.P.S. brown, but there is no mistaking the contents for anything Christmasy or kosher. It is sewage. Meanwhile, the Copenhagen Climate Summit is under way as protesters' heads and T.V. cameras roll. The Latin American left is bashing Obama and his nation. Oblivious to history, the Left pretends that painting industry Red will make it green. Perhaps they never heard of the Aral Sea. Are they unaware that 94% of Venezuelan crude goes to... the U.S...the great climate antagonist? Why is it so important to the Great Leaders of the Cuban and Venezuelan Revolutions that Obama's campaign message of joyous reconciliation be converted to an elegy of disillusionment? Speaking of revolutions, what is to become of Haiti, which was a failed society long before the Great Earthquake of biblical proportions?

"There is a natural humanitarian crisis that tugs at our conscience, but there is also a fear that instability could lead to massive waves of immigrants. Haiti is a long term crisis."

Robert Pastor

Former President Jimmy Carter's National Security Advisor for Latin America

Magnanimous U.S. troops bearing humanitarian aid have a geopolitical mission: to prevent the hemisphere's poorest country from becoming a "failed state" à la Somalia... a destabilizing nexus of illegal (fill in the blank). The U.S. is committed to helping Haiti "today, tomorrow and for the time ahead", Secretary of State Hillary Clinton declared on a January 16 visit to Port-au-Prince.

En el patio de mi casa...
Tengo una mata de almendra
Con un letrero que dice...
El que no sabe que aprenda

Rudy Calzado

It is not difficult to divine what the Castro brothers really think. No eavesdropping is required. No spy satellites, no cloak and dagger. Just turn on cuban television and connect the dots. If the sages who make U.S. policy had any sense they would be

listening to Cuban broadcasts instead of trying to ram V.O.A. programming down Cubans' throats. Cubans already know their society does not work as advertised, but it sure looks good compared to Haiti, even before the earthquake. In Cuba, all consequential matters are decided at the very top (no need to name names) and everybody else, from broadcast personalities on down to the general public, automatically tows the line or falls silent. Favorite news topics are those of global scope and issues far removed from Cuban influence. The latest example is across the ninety mile Windward Passage to Haiti. Fidel, whose legal guardian as a child was Haiti's consul in Santiago so many years ago, has correctly pointed out that the appalling death toll is the byproduct of Haiti's condition as Third World hell. The genial Castros are quite correct in their critiques but blind to the failure of their own solutions. This is the byproduct of dictatorship. When they are mistaken or wrong by omission, especially in business affairs and the economic and social realities confronting Cuba, Cuban "public opinion" follows them like three blind mice into a black hole at the end of a dead end. Of course, in a nation of knaves, fools and Forrest Gumps, "public opinion" has little meaning and no significance. Free higher education guaranteed notwithstanding and for all the sunshine in Cuba, you would be hardpressed to find a Cuban who doesn't have his head where the sun don't shine.

Paul Lafargue and the Right to be Lazy

"If, uprooting from its heart the vice which dominates it and degrades its nature, the working class were to arise in its terrible strength, not to demand the Rights of Man, which are but the rights of capital exploitation, not to demand the Right to Work, which is but the right to misery, but to forge a brazen law forbidding any man to work more than three hours a day, the earth, the old earth, trembling with joy would feel a new universe leaping within her. But how should we ask a proletariat corrupted by capitalist ethics, to take a manly resolution... Like Christ, the doleful personification of ancient slavery, the men, the women and the childeen of the proletariat have been climbing painfully for a century up the hard Calvary of pain; for a century compulsory toil has broken their bones, bruised their flesh, tortured their nerves; for a century hunger has torn their entrails and their brains. O Laziness, have pity on our long misery! O Laziness, mother of the arts and noble virtues, be thou the balm of human anguish!"

Thus spoke the Cuban son-in-law of Karl Marx, Paul Lafargue from St. Pelagie

Prison in 1880. His father once owned coffee plantations in Oriente, Cuba, and may have been part of the exodus of criollos from Haiti to Cuba after the establishment of the Negro Republic of Haiti in 1804. The family later emigrated to France. Paul Lafargue was born in Santiago de Cuba, and counted a French republican, a French Jew, a mulatto and a Caribbean Indian among his grandparents. In the words of the American syndicalist Daniel De Leon, "Paul Lafargue had a constitutional affinity with the oppressed."

Paul Lafargue's utopian vision of an advanced industrial society of leisure enjoying the fruits of ever-increasing labor productivity brought on by technology has in a limited sense been achieved in a few developed countries today. But in Third World, commodity-based economies with low human development and capital investment in a nation's key resources -it is people- the laws of market economics are astringent on society's progress even as they become less compelling, i.e. the reward side of the marketplace vanishes to a point while the downside remains a slippery slope. The wretchedly needy people of the world live in the midst of great natural resources but Capitalism is unable to provide for them no matter how high commodity prices go... hence illegal immigration all over the world. Recall, gentle reader, that when your grandfather's grandfather's cousin set sail for the Americas, he needed not a passport nor visa nor Green Card, nor a Social Security Number nor government issued I.D. Now in the Age of e-commerce, merchandise and their payment flow seamlessly across borders at the speed of light while boatloads of Haitians regularly perish at sea attempting to reach the Promised Land and eight year old American children languish on the Department of Homeland Security's no-fly list.

Socialism and public-sector economies make more sense for an impoverished nation when looked at from the miserable vantage point of survival and subsistence in a mean world. This creates a grand opening for the left and makes comity with the United States difficult. Like most of Latin America, Cuba and Haiti are birds of a feather, conceived as outposts of slave empires in the infamous Triangular Trade and molded as colonies to produce sugar, coffee and tobacco... as sovereign nations today they are destined to be societies maladroite, economic pantywaists at the mercy of world markets and their thirst for cheap labor and raw materials. The productivity, wages and living standards of these nations will never reach First World expectations and, indeed, big business interests and their governments have a long, sordid history of foiling weak nations' attempts to even the playing field. To paraphrase the world's richest man and greatest philanthropist Bill Gates, Capitalism has forsaken the wretched of the Earth.

If work doesn't pay, indolence and crime become systemic. Where material and

moral poverty abound, a money fetish takes hold. In Cuba, a great social experiment has been underway for half a century. The right to higher education, healthcare and employment are enshrined in the constitution but, alas, the right to be lazy and its exercise is the upshot. But unlike say, France, Cuba cannot afford leisure: once the world's number one sugar producer, today it cannot even feed itself and its economy does not produce enough wealth to purchase the basics from abroad. Like Mexico, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic and Haiti, remittances sent from expatriates are now a prime source of G.D.P., as important as any export. Unlike these nations, Cuba recuses itself from World trade under the mantra "socialism or death", and the U.S. have a tailor-made embargo that unwittingly assists the Cuban government to maintain its monopoly over the economy.

Evil... runnin' through our brain,
We and evils about the same.
Bad blood, through our body flows,
Where's the love, nobody knows.
Beauty, in our face you see,
Tryin' to hide all our misery.

Maurice White

Leaders reared in failed states and societies are often backward, gimpy and corrupt. If enough individuals develop a personality disorder, the national traits of an entire nation begin to change for the worse. Cuba, like Haiti, suffers a permanent economic dislocation, but on a higher plane of poverty under the direction of a disciplined, well organized group less chaotic than its surroundings. Regardless, the bonhomie of cheery islanders born in "paradise" is reduced to levity in both nations. The ennui of poverty is standard. The stellar Cuban-American entrepreneur has his diametric opposite in the feckless nincompoop running Cuba's state enterprises at a loss. He doesn't care, it is no one's property. The successful Haitian businessman is outnumbered one hundred to one by Haitians living on less than two dollars a day. He doesn't care either... he got his. Fallow fields in Cuba at an opportunity cost and deforestation in Haiti at a profit. In the Third World, churlishness in thought and deed, at work and at play; stupidity and mediocrity, like a slow-motion earthquake, rumble underfoot for years until all their latent chaos is released in the avalanche of a "natural" disaster. Thus, the jerry-built housing stock of Haiti, its concrete mix watered-down with too much sand and supporting beams lacking Rebar, its housing inspectors bought off for a song, collapse on the wicked and the

innocent alike, and presently the mighty cavalry of the North swoop down on the Apocalypse, nor will they soon depart.

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